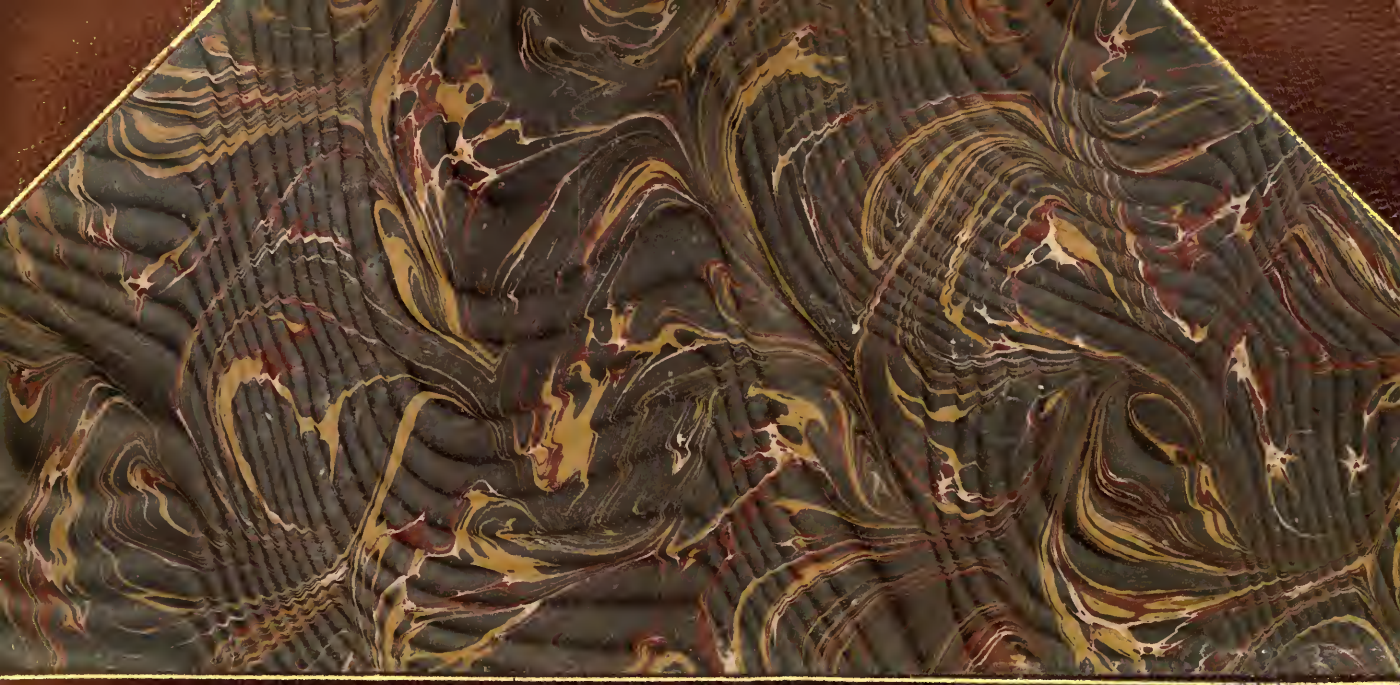

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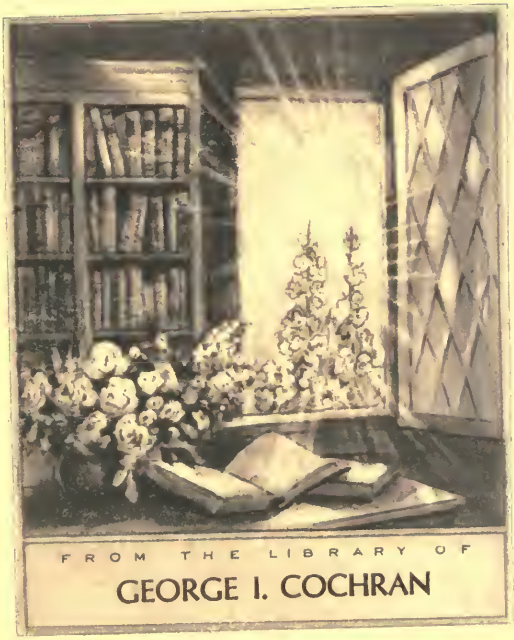
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GEORG EBERS

IV

CLEOPATRA

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

CLEOPATRA

VOLUME ONE

Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

Cleopatra and Cæsar.

Photogravure from a painting by Gérôme.

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

CLEOPATRA

VOLUME ONE

Translated from the German by
Mary J. Safford

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
New York and London

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Dedicated,

IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE,

TO MY FRIEND THE POET

WILHELM JORDAN.

179116

PREFACE.

If the author should be told that the sentimental love of our day was unknown to the pagan world, he would not cite last the two lovers, Antony and Cleopatra, and the will of the powerful Roman general, in which he expressed the desire, wherever he might die, to be buried beside the woman whom he loved to his latest hour. His wish was fulfilled, and the love-life of these two distinguished mortals, which belongs to history, has more than once afforded to art and poesy a welcome subject.

In regard to Cleopatra, especially, life was surrounded with an atmosphere of romance bordering on the fabulous. Even her bitterest foes admire her beauty and rare gifts of intellect. Her character, on the contrary, presents one of the most difficult problems of psychology. The servility of Roman poets and authors, who were unwilling frankly to acknowledge the light emanating so brilliantly from the foe of the state and the Imperator, solved it to her disadvantage. Everything that bore the name of Egyptian was hateful or suspicious to the Roman, and it was hard to

forgive this woman, born on the banks of the Nile, for having seen Julius Cæsar at her feet and compelled Mark Antony to do her bidding. Other historians, Plutarch at their head, explained the enigma more justly, and in many respects in her favour.

It was a delightful task to the author to scan more closely the personality of the hapless Queen, and from the wealth of existing information shape for himself a creature in whom he could believe. Years elapsed ere he succeeded; but now that he views the completed picture, he thinks that many persons might be disposed to object to the brightness of his colours. Yet it would not be difficult for the writer to justify every shade which he has used. If, during his creative work, he learned to love his heroine, it was because, the more distinctly he conjured before his mind the image of this wonderful woman, the more keenly he felt and the more distinctly he perceived how fully she merited not only sympathy and admiration, but, in spite of all her sins and weaknesses, the self-sacrificing affection which she inspired in so many hearts.

It was an author of no less importance than Horace who called Cleopatra "*non humilis mulier*"—a woman capable of no baseness. But the phrase gains its greatest importance from the fact that it adorns the hymn which the poet dedicated to Octavianus and his victory over Antony and

Cleopatra. It was a bold act, in such an ode, to praise the victor's foe. Yet he did it, and his words, which are equivalent to a deed, are among this greatly misjudged woman's fairest claims to renown.

Unfortunately it proved less potent than the opinion of Dio, who often distorted what Plutarch related, but probably followed most closely the farce or the popular tales which, in Rome, did not venture to show the Egyptian in a favourable light.

The Greek Plutarch, who lived much nearer the period of our heroine than Dio, estimated her more justly than most of the Roman historians. His grandfather had heard many tales of both Cleopatra and Antony from his countryman Philotas, who, during the brilliant days when they revelled in Alexandria, had lived there as a student. Of all the writers who describe the Queen, Plutarch is the most trustworthy, but even his narrative must be used with caution. We have closely followed the clear and comprehensive description given by Plutarch of the last days of our heroine. It bears the impress of truth, and to deviate widely from it would be arbitrary.

Unluckily, Egyptian records contain nothing which could have much weight in estimating the character of Cleopatra, though we have likenesses representing the Queen alone, or with her son Cæsarion. Very recently (in 1892) the fragment of a colossal double statue was found in Alexandria, which can scarcely be intended for

any persons except Cleopatra and Antony hand in hand. The upper part of the female figure is in a state of tolerable preservation, and shows a young and attractive face. The male figure was doubtless sacrificed to Octavianus's command to destroy Antony's statues. We are indebted to Herr Dr. Walther, in Alexandria, for an excellent photograph of this remarkable piece of sculpture. Comparatively few other works of plastic art, in which we here include coins, that could render us familiar with our heroine's appearance, have been preserved.

Though the author must especially desire to render his creation a work of art, it is also requisite to strive for fidelity. As the heroine's portrait must reveal her true character, so the life represented here must correspond in every line with the civilization of the period described. For this purpose we placed Cleopatra in the centre of a larger group of people, whom she influences, and who enable her personality to be displayed in the various relations of life.

Should the author succeed in making the picture of the remarkable woman, who was so differently judged, as "lifelike" and vivid as it stamped itself upon his own imagination, he might remember with pleasure the hours which he devoted to this book.

GEORG EBERS.

TÜTZING ON THE STARNBERGER SEE, *October 5, 1893.*

CLEOPATRA.

CHAPTER I.

GORGIAS, the architect, had learned to bear the scorching sunbeams of the Egyptian noonday. Though not yet thirty, he had directed—first as his late father's assistant and afterwards as his successor—the construction of the huge buildings erected by Cleopatra in Alexandria.

Now he was overwhelmed with commissions; yet he had come hither ere the hours of work were over, merely to oblige a youth who had barely passed the confines of boyhood.

True, the person for whom he made this sacrifice was Cæsarion, the son whom Cleopatra had given to Julius Cæsar. Antony had honoured him with the proud title of "King of kings"; yet he was permitted neither to rule nor even to issue orders, for his mother kept him aloof from affairs of state, and he himself had no desire to hold the sceptre.

Gorgias had granted his wish the more readily,

because it was apparent that he wanted to speak to him in private, though he had not the least idea what Cæsarion desired to confide, and, under any circumstances, he could give him only a brief interview. The fleet, at whose head the Queen had set sail, with Mark Antony, for Greece, must have already met Octavianus's galleys, and doubtless a battle wherein the destiny of the world was decided had also been fought upon the land. Gorgias believed that the victory would fall to Antony and the Queen, and wished the noble pair success with his whole heart. He was even obliged to act as if the battle had been already determined in their favour, for the architectural preparations for the reception of the conquerors were entrusted to his charge, and that very day must witness the decision of the location of the colossal statues which represented Antony hand in hand with his royal love.

The epitrop Mardion, a eunuch, who as Regent, represented Cleopatra; and Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who rarely opposed him, wished to have the piece of sculpture erected in a different place from the one he favoured. The principal objection to the choice made by the powerful head of the government was that it had fallen on land owned by a private individual. This might lead to difficulties, and Gorgias opposed it. As an artist, too, he did not approve Mardion's plan; for though, on Didymus's land, the statues would have faced the sea,

which the Regent and the Keeper of the Seal regarded as very important, no fitting background could have been obtained.

At any rate, the architect could now avail himself of Cæsarion's invitation to overlook from the appointed place of meeting—the lofty steps of the Temple of Isis—the Bruchium, and seek the best site for the twin statues. He was anxious to select the most suitable one; the master who had created this work of art had been his friend, and had closed his eyes in death shortly after its completion.

The sanctuary whence Gorgias commenced his survey was in one of the fairest portions of the Bruchium, the Alexandrian quarter, where stood the royal palace with its extensive annexes, the finest temples—except the Serapeum, situated in another part of the city—and the largest theatres; the Forum invited the council of Macedonian citizens to its assemblies, and the Museum afforded a resort for the scholars.

The little square closed in the east by the Temple of Isis was called the "Corner of the Muses," on account of the two marble statues of women before the entrance of the house, which, with its large garden facing the square northward and extending along the sea, belonged to Didymus, an old and highly respected scholar and member of the Museum.

The day had been hot, and the shade of the Temple of Isis was very welcome to the architect.

This sanctuary rested upon a lofty foundation, and a long flight of steps led to the cella. The spot afforded Gorgias a wide prospect.

Most of the buildings within his vision belonged to the time of Alexander and his successors in the house of the Ptolemies, but some, and by no means the least stately, were the work of Gorgias himself or of his father. The artist's heart swelled with enthusiastic delight at the sight of this portion of his native city.

He had been in Rome, and visited many other places numbered among the world's fairest and most populous cities; but not one contained so many superb works of art crowded together in so small a space.

"If one of the immortals themselves," he murmured, "should strive to erect for the inhabitants of Olympus a quarter meet for their grandeur and beauty, it could scarcely be much more superb or better fitted to satisfy the artistic needs which we possess as their gift, and it would surely be placed on the shore of such a sea."

While speaking, he shaded his keen eyes with his hand. The architect, who usually devoted his whole attention to the single object that claimed his notice, now permitted himself the pleasure of enjoying the entire picture in whose finishing touches he had himself borne a part; and, as his practised eye perceived in every temple and colonnade the studied and finished harmony of form,

and the admirable grouping of the various buildings and statues, he said to himself, with a sigh of satisfaction, that his own art was the noblest and building the highest of royal pleasures. No doubt this belief was shared by the princes who, three centuries before, had endeavoured to obtain an environment for their palaces which should correspond with their vast power and overflowing wealth, and at the same time give tangible expression to their reverence for the gods and their delight in art and beauty. No royal race in the universe could boast of a more magnificent abode. These thoughts passed through Gorgias's mind as the deep azure hue of sea and sky blended with the sunlight to bring into the strongest relief all that the skill and brains of man, aided by exhaustless resources, had here created.

Waiting, usually a hard task for the busy architect, became a pleasure in this spot; for the rays streaming lavishly in all directions from the diadem of the sovereign sun flooded with dazzling radiance the thousands of white marble statues on the temples and colonnades, and were reflected from the surfaces of the polished granite of the obelisks and the equally smooth walls of the white, yellow, and green marble, the syenite, and the brown, speckled porphyry of sanctuaries and palaces. They seemed to be striving to melt the bright mosaic pictures which covered every foot of the ground, where no highway intersected and

no tree shaded it, and flashed back again from the glimmering metal or the smooth glaze in the gay tiles on the roofs of the temples and houses. Here they glittered on the metal ornaments, yonder they seemed to be trying to rival the brilliancy of the gilded domes, to lend to the superb green of the tarnished bronze surfaces the sparkling lustre of the emerald, or to transform the blue and red lines of the white marble temples into lapis-lazuli and coral and their gilded decorations into topaz. The pictures in the mosaic pavement of the squares, and on the inner walls of the colonnades, were doubly effective against the light masses of marble surrounding them, which in their turn were indebted to the pictures for affording the eye an attractive variety instead of dazzling monotony.

Here the light of the westering sun enhanced the brilliancy of colour in the flags and streamers which fluttered beside the obelisks and Egyptian pylons, over the triumphal arches and the gates of the temples and palaces. Yet even the exquisite purplish blue of the banner waving above the palace on the peninsula of Lochias, now occupied by Cleopatra's children, was surpassed by the hue of the sea, whose deep azure near the shore merged far away into bands of lighter and darker blue, blending with dull or whitish green.

Gorgias was accustomed to grasp fully whatever he permitted to influence him, and though still loyal to his custom of associating with his art

every remarkable work of the gods or man, he had not forgotten in his enjoyment of the familiar scene the purpose of his presence in this spot.

No, the garden of Didymus was *not* the proper place for his friend's last work.

While gazing at the lofty plane, sycamore, and mimosa trees which surrounded the old scholar's home, the quiet square below him suddenly became astir with noisy life, for all classes of the populace were gathering in front of the sequestered house, as if some unusual spectacle attracted them.

What could they want of the secluded philosopher ?

Gorgias gazed earnestly at them, but soon turned away again ; a gay voice from below called his name.

A singular procession had approached the temple—a small body of armed men, led by a short, stout fellow, whose big head, covered with bushy curls, was crowned with a laurel wreath. He was talking eagerly to a younger man, but had paused with the others in front of the sanctuary to greet the architect. The latter shouted a few pleasant words in reply. The laurel-crowned figure made a movement as if he intended to join him, but his companion checked him, and, after a short parley, the older man gave the younger one his hand, flung his heavy head back, and strutted onward like a peacock, followed by his whole train.

The other looked after him, shrugging his shoulders; then called to Gorgias, asking what boon he desired from the goddess.

"Your presence," replied the architect blithely.

"Then Isis will show herself gracious to you," was the answer, and the next instant the two young men cordially grasped each other's hands.

Both were equally tall and well formed; their features bore witness to their Greek origin; nay, they might have been taken for brothers, had not the architect's whole appearance seemed sturdier and plainer than that of his companion, whom he called "Dion" and friend. As the latter heaped merry sarcasms upon the figure wearing the laurel wreath who had just left him, Anaxenor, the famous zither-player, on whom Antony had bestowed the revenues of four cities and permission to keep a body-guard, and Gorgias's deeper voice sometimes assented, sometimes opposed with sensible objections, the difference between these two men of the same age and race became clearly apparent.

Both showed a degree of self-reliance unusual at their age; but the architect's was the assurance which a man gains by toil and his own merit, Dion's that which is bestowed by large possessions and a high position in society. Those who were ignorant that the weight of Dion's carefully prepared speech had more than once turned the scale in the city councils would probably have been disposed to take him for one of the careless world-

lings who had no lack of representatives among the gilded youth of Alexandria; while the architect's whole exterior, from his keen eye to the stouter leather of his sandals, revealed earnest purpose and unassuming ability.

Their friendship had commenced when Gorgias built a new palace for Dion. During long business association people become well acquainted, even though their conversations relate solely to direction and execution. But in this case, he who gave the orders had been only the inspirer and adviser, the architect the warm-hearted friend, eager to do his utmost to realize what hovered before the other's mind as the highest attainable excellence. So the two young men became first dear, and finally almost indispensable to each other. As the architect discovered in the wealthy man of the world many qualities whose existence he had not suspected, the latter was agreeably surprised to find in the artist, associated with his solidity of character, a jovial companion, who—this first made him really beloved by his friend—had no lack of weaknesses.

When the palace was completed to Dion's satisfaction and became one of the most lauded ornaments of the city, the young men's friendship assumed a new form, and it would have been difficult to say which received the most benefit.

Dion had just been stopped by the zither-player to ask for confirmation of the tidings that the unit-

ed forces of Antony and Cleopatra had gained a great victory on sea and land.

In the eating-house at Kanopus, where he had breakfasted, every one was full of the joyful news, and rivers of wine had been drunk to the health of the victors and the destruction of the malicious foe.

"In these days," cried Dion, "not only weak-brained fellows, like the zither-player, believe me omniscient, but many sensible men also. And why? Because, forsooth, I am the nephew of Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who is on the brink of despair because he himself knows nothing, not even the veriest trifle."

"Yet he stands nearest to the Regent," observed Gorgias, "and must learn, if any one does, how the fleet fares."

"You too!" sighed his friend. "Had I been standing so far above the ground as you, the architect—by the dog, I should not have failed to note the quarter whence the wind blew! It has been southerly a whole fortnight, and keeps back the galleys coming from the north. The Regent knows nothing, absolutely nothing, and my uncle, of course, no more. But if they do learn anything they will be shrewd enough not to enrich me with it."

"True, there are other rumours afloat," said the architect thoughtfully. "If I were in Mardion's place——"

"Thank the Olympians that you are not,"

laughed his companion. "He has as many cares as a fish has scales. And one, the greatest.—That pert young Antyllus was over-ready with his tongue yesterday at Barine's. Poor fellow! He'll have to answer for it to his tutor at home."

"You mean the remark about the Queen's accompanying the fleet?"

"St!" said Dion, putting his finger on his lips, for many men and women were now ascending the temple steps. Several carried flowers and cakes, and the features of most expressed joyful emotion. The news of the victory had reached their ears, and they wanted to offer sacrifices to the goddess whom Cleopatra, "the new Isis," preferred to all others.

The first court-yard of the sanctuary was astir with life. They could hear the ringing of the sistrum bells and the murmuring chant of the priests. The quiet fore-court of the little temple of the goddess, which here, in the Greek quarter of palaces, had as few visitors as the great Temple of Isis in the Rhakotis was overcrowded, had now become the worst possible rendezvous for men who stood so near the rulers of the government. The remark made about the Queen the evening before by Antyllus, Antony's nineteen-year-old son, at the house of Barine, a beautiful young woman who attracted all the prominent men in Alexandria, was the more imprudent because it coincided with the opinion of all the wisest heads. The reckless

youth enthusiastically reverenced his father, but Cleopatra, the object of Antony's love, and—in the Egyptians' eyes—his wife, was not Antyllus's mother. He was the son of Fulvia, his father's first wife, and feeling himself a Roman, would have preferred a thousand times to live on the banks of the Tiber. Besides, it was certain—Antony's stanchest friends made no attempt to conceal the fact—that the Queen's presence with the army exerted a disturbing influence, and could not fail to curb the daring courage of the brave general. Antyllus, with the reckless frankness inherited from his father, had expressed this view in the presence of all Barine's guests, and in a form which would be only too quickly spread throughout Alexandria, whose inhabitants relished such speeches.

These remarks would be slow in reaching the plain people who were attracted to the temple by the news of the victory, yet many doubtless knew Cæsarion, whom the architect was awaiting here. It would be wiser to meet the prince at the foot of the steps. Both men, therefore, went down to the square, though the crowds seeking the temple and thronging the space before Didymus's house made it more and more difficult to pace to and fro.

They were anxious to learn whether the rumour that Didymus's garden was to be taken for the twin statues had already spread abroad, and their first questions revealed that this was the case. It

was even stated that the old sage's house was to be torn down, and within a few hours. This was vehemently contradicted; but a tall, scrawny man seemed to have undertaken to defend the ruler's violence.

The friends knew him well. It was the Syrian Philostratus, a clever extempore speaker and agitator of the people, who placed his clever tongue at the disposal of the highest bidder.

"The rascal is probably now in my uncle's employ," said Dion. "The idea of putting the piece of sculpture there originated with him, and it is difficult to turn him from such plans. There is some secret object to be gained here. That is why they have brought Philostratus. I wonder if the conspiracy is connected in any way with Barine, whose husband—unfortunately for her—he was before he cast her off."

"Cast her off!" exclaimed Gorgias wrathfully. "How that sounds! True, he did it, but to persuade him the poor woman sacrificed half the fortune her father had earned by his brush. You know as well as I that life with that scoundrel would be unbearable."

"Very true," replied Dion quietly. "But as all Alexandria melted into admiration after her singing of the *yalemos* at the Adonis festival, she no longer needed her contemptible consort."

"How can you take pleasure, whenever it is possible, in casting such slurs upon a woman,

whom but yesterday you called blameless, charming, peerless?"

"That the light she sheds may not dazzle your eyes. I know how sensitive they are."

"Then spare, instead of irritating them. Besides, your suggestion gives food for thought. Barine is the granddaughter of the man whose garden they want, and the advocate would probably be glad to injure both. But I'll spoil his game. It is *my* business to choose the site for the statues."

"Yours?" replied Dion. "Unless some one who is more powerful opposes you. I would try to win my uncle, but there are others superior to him. The Queen has gone, it is true; but Iras, whose commands do not die away in empty air, told me this morning that she had her own ideas about the erection of the statue."

"Then you bring Philostratus here!" cried the architect.

"I?" asked the other in amazement.

"Ay, you," asserted Gorgias. "Did not you say that Iras, with whom you played when a boy, was now becoming troublesome by watching your every step? And then—you visit Barine constantly, and she so evidently prefers you, that the fact might easily reach the ears of Iras."

"As Argus has a hundred, jealousy has a thousand eyes," interrupted Dion, "yet I seek nothing from Barine, save two pleasant hours when the day

is drawing towards its close. No matter; Iras, I suppose, heard that I was favoured by this much-admired woman. Iras herself has some little regard for me, so she bought Philostratus. She is willing to pay something for the sake of injuring the woman who stands between us, or the old man who has the good or evil fortune of being her rival's grandfather. No, no; that would be too base! And believe me, if Iras desired to ruin Barine, she need not make so long a circuit. Besides, she is not really a wicked woman. Or is she? All I know is that where any advantage is to be gained for the Queen, she does not shrink even from doubtful means, and also that the hours speed swiftly for any one in her society. Yes, Iras, Iras—I like to utter the name. Yet I do not love her, and she—loves only herself, and—a thing few can say—another still more. What is the world, what am I to her, compared with the Queen, the idol of her heart? Since Cleopatra's departure, Iras seems like the forsaken Ariadne, or a young roe which has strayed from its mother. But stop; she may have a hand in the game: the Queen trusted her as if she were her sister, her daughter. No one knows what she and Charmian are to her. They are called waiting-women, but are their sovereign's dearest friends. When, on the departure of the fleet, Cleopatra was compelled to leave Iras here—she was ill with a fever—she gave her the charge of her children, even those whose beards were be-

ginning to grow, the 'King of kings' Cæsarion, whose tutor punishes him for every act of disobedience; and the unruly lad Antyllus, who has forced his way the last few evenings into our friend's house."

"Antony, his own father, introduced him to her."

"Very true, and Antyllus took Cæsarion there. This vexed Iras, like everything which may disturb the Queen. Barine is troublesome on account of Cleopatra, whom she wishes to spare every annoyance, and perhaps she dislikes her a little for my sake. Now she wants to inflict on the old man, Barine's grandfather, whom she loves, some injury which the spoiled, imprudent woman will scarcely accept quietly, and which will rouse her to commit some folly that can be used against her. Iras will hardly seek her life, but she may have in mind exile or something of that kind. She knows people as well as I know her, my neighbour and playmate, whom many a time I was obliged to lift down from some tree into which the child had climbed as nimbly as a kitten."

"I myself suggested this conjecture, yet I cannot credit her with such unworthy intrigues," cried Gorgias.

"Credit her?" repeated Dion, shrugging his shoulders. "I only transport myself in imagination to the court and to the soul of the woman who helps make rain and sunshine there. You have

columns rounded and beams hewed that they may afterwards support the roof to which in due time you wish to direct attention. She and all who have a voice in the management of court affairs look first at the roof and then seek anything to raise and support it, though it should be corpses, ruined lives, and broken hearts. The point is that the roof shall stand until the architect, the Queen, sees and approves it. As to the rest—— But there is the carriage—— It doubtless brings—— You were——"

He paused, laid his hand on his friend's arm, and whispered hastily: "Iras is undoubtedly at the bottom of this, and it is not Antyllus, but yonder dreaming lad, for whom she is moving. When she spoke of the statues just now, she asked in the same breath where I had seen him on the evening of the day before yesterday, and that was the very time he called on Barine. The plot was made by her, and Iras is doing all the work. The mouse is not caught while the trap is closed, and she is just raising her little hand to open it."

"If only she does not use some man's hand," replied the architect wrathfully, and then turned towards the carriage and the elderly man who had just left it, and was now approaching the two friends.

CHAPTER II.

When Cæsarion's companion reached Dion and Gorgias, the former modestly made a movement to retire. But Archibius was acquainted with both, and begged him to remain. There was an air of precision and clearness in the voice and quiet movements of this big, broad-shouldered man, with his robust frame and well-developed limbs. Though only a few years beyond forty, not merely his grey hair but the calm, impressive dignity of his whole manner indicated a more advanced age.

"The young King yonder," he began in a deep, musical voice, motioning towards the equipage, "wished to speak to you here in person, Gorgias, but by my advice he refrained from mingling with the crowd. I have brought him hither in a closed carriage. If the plan suits you, enter it and talk with him while I keep watch here. Strange things seem to be occurring, and yonder—or am I mistaken? Has the monster dragged along there any connection with the twin statues of the Queen and her friend? Was it you who selected that place for them?"

"No," replied the architect. "The order was issued over my head and against my will."

"I thought so," replied the other. "This is the very matter of which Cæsarion wishes to speak. If you can prevent the erection of the statues on Didymus's land, so much the better. I will do everything in my power to aid you, but in the Queen's absence that is little."

"Then what can be said of *my* influence?" asked the architect. "Who, in these days, knows whether the sky will be blue or grey to-morrow? I can guarantee one thing only: I will do my best to prevent this injury of an estimable citizen, interference with the laws of our city, and violation of good taste."

"Say so to the young King, but express yourself cautiously," replied Archibius as the architect turned towards the carriage.

As soon as Dion and the older man were alone, the latter inquired the cause of the increasing uproar, and as, like every well-disposed Alexandrian, he esteemed Archibius, and knew that he was intimately acquainted with the owner of the imperilled garden, and therefore with his granddaughter Barine, he confided his anxiety to him without reserve.

"Iras is your niece, it is true," he said in his open-hearted manner, "but I know that you understand her character. It suits her now to fling a golden apple into the path of a person whom she

dislikes and believes incautious, that she may pick it up and thus afford her an opportunity to bring a charge of theft."

Noting the inquiring glance Archibius fixed upon him as he made this comparison, he changed his tone and continued more earnestly: "Zeus is great, but destiny is superior even to him. Zeus can accomplish much, but when Iras and your sister Charmian, who unfortunately is now with the Queen, wish to effect anything, he, like the Regent Mardion, must give way. The more lovable Cleopatra is, the more surely every one prizes a position near her person above aught else, especially such trifles as law and justice."

"These are harsh words," responded Archibius, "and seem the more bitter in proportion to the germ of truth which they contain. Our court shares the fate of every other in the East, and those to whom Rome formerly set the example of holding law and justice sacred——"

"Can now go there," interrupted Dion, "to learn how rudely both are trampled under foot. The sovereigns here and there may smile at one another like the augurs. They are like brothers——"

"But with the difference," Archibius broke in, "that the head of our public affairs is the very embodiment of affability and grace; while in Rome, on the contrary, harsh severity and bloody arrogance, or even repulsive servility, guide the reins."

Here Archibius interrupted himself to point to the shouting throng advancing towards them. "You are right," Dion answered. "Let us defer this discussion till we can pursue it in the house of the charming Barine. But I rarely meet you there, though by blood you are so nearly allied to her father. I am her friend—at my age that might easily mean her lover. But in our case the comparison would not suit. Yet perhaps you will believe me, for you have the right to call yourself the friend of the most bewitching of women."

A sorrowful smile flitted over the grave, set features of the older man, who, raising his hand as if in protest, answered carelessly: "I grew up with Cleopatra, but a private citizen loves a queen only as a divinity. I believe in your friendship for Barine, though I deem it dangerous."

"If you mean that it might injure the lovely woman," replied Dion, raising his head more proudly as if to intimate that he required no warning, even from him, "perhaps you are right. Only I beg you not to misunderstand me. I am not vain enough to suppose that I could win her heart, but unfortunately there are many who cannot forgive the power of attraction which she exerts over me as well as upon all. So many men gladly visit Barine's house that there are an equal number of women who would rejoice to close it. Among them, of course, is Iras. She dislikes my friend; nay, I fear that what you witness yonder is the

apple she flung in order, if not to ruin, at least to drive her from the city, ere the Queen—may the gods grant her victory!—ere Cleopatra returns. You know your niece Iras. Like your sister Charmian, she will shrink from nothing to remove an annoyance from her mistress's pathway, and it will hardly please Cleopatra when she learns that the two youths whose welfare lies nearest her heart —Antyllus and Cæsarion—seek Barine's house, no matter how stainless the latter's reputation may be."

"I have just heard of it," replied Archibius, "and I, too, am anxious. Antony's son has inherited much of his father's insatiable love of pleasure. But Cæsarion! He has not yet ventured out of the dreamland which surrounds him into actual life. What others scarcely perceive deals him a serious blow. I fear Eros is sharpening arrows for him which will pierce deep into his heart. While talking with me he seemed strangely changed. His dreamy eyes glittered like a drunkard's when he spoke of Barine. I fear, I fear——"

"Impossible!" cried Dion, in surprise, nay, almost terror. "If that is the case, Iras is not wholly wrong, and we must deal with the matter differently. But it is of the first importance to conceal the fact that Cæsarion has any interest in the affairs of the old house-owner. To seek to maintain the old man's right to his own property is a matter of course, and I will undertake to do

this and try to get yonder orator home—— Just see how the braggart is swinging his arms in Iras's service! As for Barine, it will be well to induce her to leave of her own free will a city where it will be made unpleasant for her. Try to persuade her to pursue this course. If I went to her with such a suggestion, I, who yesterday—— No, no! Besides, she might hear that Iras and I—— She would imagine all sorts of absurdities. You know what jealousy means. To you, whom she esteems, she would surely listen, and she need not go far from the city. If the heart of this enthusiastic boy—who might some day desire to be 'King of kings' not only in name—should really be fired with love for Barine, what serious misfortune might follow! We must secure her from him. She could not go to my country house among the papyrus plantations at Sebennys. It would afford too much license for evil tongues. But you—your villa at Kanopus is too near—but, if I am not mistaken, you have——"

"My estate in the lake region is remote enough, and will be at her disposal," interrupted the other. "The house is always kept ready for my reception. I will do my best to persuade her, for your advice is prudent. She must be withdrawn from the boy's eyes."

"I shall learn the result of your mission to-morrow," cried Dion eagerly—"nay, this evening. If she consents, I will tell Iras, as if by accident,

that Barine has gone to Upper Egypt to drink new milk, or something of that kind. Iras is a shrewd woman, and will be glad if she can keep aloof from such trifles during the time which will decide the fate of Cleopatra and of the world."

"My thoughts, too, are always with the army," said Archibius. "How trivial everything else seems compared with the result which will be determined in the next few days! But life is made up of trifles. They are food, drink, maintenance. Should the Queen return triumphant, and find Cæsarion in wrong paths——"

"We must close them against him," exclaimed Dion.

"That the boy may not follow Barine?" asked Archibius, shaking his head. "I think we need feel no anxiety on that score. He will doubtless eagerly desire to do so, but with him there is a wide gulf between the wish and its fulfilment. Antyllus is differently constituted. He would be quite capable of ordering a horse to be saddled, or the sails of a boat to be spread in order to pursue her—beyond the Cataract if necessary. So we must maintain the utmost secrecy concerning the place to which Barine voluntarily exiles herself."

"But she is not yet on her way," replied Dion with a faint sigh. "She is bound to this city by many ties."

"I know it," answered Archibius, confirming his companion's fear. The latter, pointing to the

equipage, said in a rapid, earnest tone: "Gorgias is beckoning. But, before we part, let me beseech you to do everything to persuade Barine to leave here. She is in serious danger. Conceal nothing from her, and say that her friends will not leave her too long in solitude."

Archibius, with a significant glance, shook his finger at the young man in playful menace, and then went up to the carriage.

Cæsarion's clear-cut but pallid face, whose every feature resembled that of his father, the great Cæsar, bent towards them from the opening above the door, as he greeted both with a formal bend of the head and a patronizing glance. His eyes had sparkled with boyish glee when he first caught sight of the friend from whom he had been separated several weeks, but to the stranger he wished to assume the bearing which beseemed a king. He desired to make him feel his superior position, for he was ill-disposed towards him. He had seen him favoured by the woman whom he imagined he loved, and whose possession he had been promised by the secret science of the Egyptians, whose power to unveil the mysteries of the future he firmly believed. Antyllus, Antony's son, had taken him to Barine, and she had received him with the consideration due his rank. Spite of her bright graciousness, boyish timidity had hitherto prevented any word of love to the young beauty whom he saw surrounded by so many distinguished

men of mature years. Yet his beaming, expressive eyes must have revealed his feelings to her. Doubtless his glances had not been unobserved, for only a few hours before an Egyptian woman had stopped him at the temple of his father, Cæsar, to which, according to the fixed rules governing the routine of his life, he went daily at a certain hour to pray, to offer sacrifices, to anoint the stone of the altar, or to crown the statue of the departed emperor.

Cæsarion had instantly recognized her as the female slave whom he had seen in Barine's atrium, and ordered his train to fall back.

Fortunately his tutor, Rhodon, had not fulfilled his duty of accompanying him. So the youth had ventured to follow the slave woman, and in the shadow of the mimosas, in the little grove beside the temple, he found Barine's litter. His heart throbbed violently as, full of anxious expectation, he obeyed her signal to draw nearer. Still, she had granted him nothing save the favour of gratifying one of her wishes. But his heart had swelled almost to bursting when, resting her beautiful white arm on the door of her litter, she had told him that unjust men were striving to rob her grandfather Didymus of his garden, and she expected him, who bore the title of the "King of kings" to do his best to prevent such a crime.

It had been difficult for him to grasp her meaning while she was speaking. There was a roaring

sound in his ears as if, instead of being in the silent temple grove, he was standing on a stormy day upon the surf-beaten promontory of Lochias. He had not ventured to raise his eyes and look into her face. Not until she closed with the question whether she might hope for his assistance did her gaze constrain him to glance up. Ah, what had he not fancied he read in her imploring blue eyes! how unspeakably beautiful she had appeared!

He had stood before her as if bereft of his senses. His sole knowledge was that he had promised, with his hand on his heart, to do everything in his power to prevent what threatened to cause her pain. Then her little hand, with its sparkling rings, was again stretched towards him, and he had resolved to kiss it; but while he glanced around at his train, she had already waved him a farewell, and the litter was borne away.

He stood motionless, like the figure of a man on one of his mother's ancient vases, staring in bewilderment after the flying figure of Happiness, whom he might easily have caught by her floating locks. How he raged over the miserable indecision which had defrauded him of so much joy! Yet nothing was really lost. If he succeeded in fulfilling her wishes, she could not fail to be grateful; and then——

He pondered over the person to whom he should apply—Mardion, the Regent, or the Keeper of the Seal? No, they had planned the erection of the

group of sculpture in the philosopher's garden. To Iras, his mother's confidante? Nay, last of all to her. The cunning woman would have perceived his purpose and betrayed it to the Regent. Ah, if Charmian, his mother's other attendant, had been present! but she was with the fleet, which perhaps was even now engaged in battle with the enemy.

At this recollection his eyes again sought the ground—he had not been permitted to take the place in the army to which his birth entitled him, while his mother and Charmian—— But he did not pursue this painful current of thought; for a serious reproach had forced itself upon him and sent the blood to his cheeks. He wished to be considered a man, and yet, in these fateful days, which would determine the destiny of his mother, his native city, Egypt, and that Rome which he, the only son of Cæsar, was taught to consider his heritage, he was visiting a beautiful woman, thinking of her, and of her alone. His days and half the nights were passed in forming plans for securing her love, forgetful of what should have occupied his whole heart.

Only yesterday Iras had sharply admonished him that, in times like these, it was the duty of every friend of Cleopatra, and every foe of her foes, to be with the army at least in mind.

He had remembered this, but, instead of heeding the warning, the thought of her had merely

recalled her uncle, Archibius, who possessed great influence, not merely on account of his wealth but because every one also knew his high standing in the regard of the Queen. Besides, the clever, kindly man had always been friendly to him from childhood, and like a revelation came the idea of applying to him, and to the architect Gorgias, who had a voice in the matter, and by whom he had been strongly attracted during the period while he was rebuilding the wing assigned to the prince in the palace at Lochias.

So one of the attendants was instantly despatched with the little tablet which invited Gorgias to the interview at the Temple of Isis.

Then, in the afternoon, Cæsarion went secretly in a boat to the little palace of Archibius, situated on the seashore at Kanopus, and now as the latter, with his friend, stood beside the carriage door, he explained to them that he was going with the architect to old Didymus to assure him of his assistance.

This was unadvisable in every respect, but it required all the weight of the older man's reasons to induce the prince to yield. The consequences which might ensue, should the populace discover that he was taking sides against the Regent, would be incalculable. But submission and withdrawal were especially difficult to the young "King of kings." He longed to pose as a man in Dion's presence, and as this could not be, he strove to maintain the semblance of independence by yield-

ing his resolve only on the plea of not desiring to injure the aged scholar and his granddaughter. Finally, he again entreated the architect to secure Didymus in the possession of his property. When at last he drove away with Archibius, twilight was already gathering, torches were lighted in front of the temple and the little mausoleum adjoining the cella, and pitch-pans were blazing in the square.

CHAPTER III.

"THE lad is in an evil plight," said Gorgias, shaking his head thoughtfully as the equipage rolled over the stone pavement of the Street of the King.

"And over yonder, added Dion," "the prospect is equally unpleasing. Philostratus is setting the people crazy. But the hired mischief-maker will soon wish he had been less ready to seize Iras's gold coins."

"And to think," cried the architect, "that Barine was this scoundrel's wife! How could it be——"

"She was but a child when they married her," interrupted Dion. "Who consults a girl of fifteen in the choice of a husband? And Philostratus—he was my classmate at Rhodus—at that time had the fairest prospects. His brother Alexas, Antony's favourite, could easily advance him. Barine's father was dead, her mother was accustomed to follow Didymus's counsel, and the clever fellow had managed to strew dust in the old man's eyes. Long and lank as he is, he is not bad-looking even now.

When he appeared as an orator he pleased his hearers. This turned his head, and a spendthrift's blood runs in his veins. To bring his fair young bride to a stately mansion, he undertook the bad cause of the thievish tax-collector Pyrrhus, and cleared him.

"He bought a dozen false witnesses."

"There were sixteen. Afterwards they became as numerous as the open mouths you see shouting yonder. It is time to silence them. Go to the old man's house and soothe him—Barine also, if she is there. If you find messengers from the Regent, raise objections to the unprecedented decree. You know the portions of the law which can be turned to Didymus's advantage."

"Since the reign of Euergetes II, registered landed property has been unassailable, and his was recorded."

"So much the better. Tell the officials also, confidentially, that you know of objections just discovered which may perhaps change the Regent's views."

"And, above all, I shall insist upon my right to choose the place for the twin statues. The Queen herself directed the others to heed my opinion."

"That will cast the heaviest weight into the scale. We shall meet later. You will prefer to keep away from Barine to-night. If you see her, tell her that Archibius said he would visit her later

—for an object I will explain afterwards. I shall probably go to Iras to bring her to reason. It will be better not to mention Cæsarion's wish."

"Certainly—and you will give nothing to yonder brawler."

"On the contrary. I feel very generous. If Peitho will aid me, the insatiate fellow will get more than may be agreeable to him."

Then grasping the architect's hand, Dion forced his way through the throng surrounding the high platform on wheels, upon which the closely covered piece of sculpture had been rolled up. The gate of the scholar's house stood open, for an officer in the Regent's service had really entered a short time before, but the Scythian guards sent by the exegetus Demetrius, one of Barine's friends, were keeping back the throng of curious spectators.

Their commander knew Gorgias, and he was soon standing in the impluvium of the scholar's house, an oblong, roofless space, with a fountain in the centre, whose spray moistened the circular bed of flowers around it. The old slave had just lighted some three-branched lamps which burned on tall stands. The officers sent by the Regent to inform Didymus that his garden would be converted into a public square had just arrived.

When Gorgias entered, these magistrates, their clerks, and the witnesses accompanying them—a group of twenty men, at whose head was Apollonius, a distinguished officer of the royal treasury

—were in the house. The slave who admitted the architect informed him of it.

In the atrium a young girl, doubtless a member of the household, stopped him. He was not mistaken in supposing that she was Helena, Didymus's younger granddaughter, of whom Barine had spoken. True, she resembled her sister neither in face nor figure, for while the young matron's hair was fair and waving, the young girl's thick black tresses were wound around her head in a smooth braid. Very unlike Barine's voice, too, were the deep, earnest tones trembling with emotion, in which she confronted him with the brief question, concealing a faint reproach, "Another demand?"

After first ascertaining that he was really speaking to Helena, his friend's sister, he hastily told her his name, adding that, on the contrary, he had come to protect her grandfather from a serious misfortune.

When his glance first rested upon her in the dimly lighted room, the impression she made upon him was by no means favourable. The pure brow, which seemed to him too high for a woman's face, wore an indignant frown; and though her mouth was beautiful in form, its outlines were often marred by a passionate tremor that lent the exquisitely chiselled features a harsh, nay, bitter expression. But she had scarcely heard the motive of his presence ere, pressing her hand upon her bosom with a sigh of relief, she eagerly exclaimed:

"Oh, do what you can to avert this terrible deed! No one knows how the old man loves this house. And my grandmother! They will die if it is taken from them."

Her large eyes rested upon him with a warm, imploring light; and the stern, almost repellent voice thrilled with love for her relatives. He must lend his aid here, and how gladly he would do so! He assured her of this; and Helena, who had heard him mentioned as a man of ability, saw in him a helper in need, and begged him, with touching fervour, to show her grandfather, when he came before the officers, that all was not lost.

The astonished architect asked if Didymus did not know what was impending, and Helena hastily replied:

"He is working in the summer-house by the sea. Apollonius is a kind-hearted man, and will wait until I have prepared my grandfather. I must go to him. He has already sent Philotas—his pupil, who finds and unrolls his books—a dozen times to inquire the cause of the tumult outside; but I replied that the crowds were flocking to the harbour on account of the Queen. There is often a mob shouting madly; but nothing disturbs my grandfather when he is absorbed in his work; and his pupil—a young student from Amphissa—loves him and does what I bid him. My grandmother, too, knows nothing yet. She is deaf, and the female slaves dare not tell her. After her recent

attack of giddiness, the doctor said that any sudden shock might injure her. If only I can find the right words, that my grandfather may not be too sorely hurt!"

"Shall I accompany you?" asked Gorgias kindly.

"No," she answered hurriedly. "He needs time ere he will trust strangers. Only, if Apollonius discloses the terrible truth, and his grief threatens to overpower him, comfort him, and show him that we still have friends who are ready to protect us from such disaster."

She waved her hand in token of gratitude, and hurried through the little side gate into the garden.

Gorgias looked after her with sparkling eyes, and drew a long breath. How good this girl must be, how wisely she cared for her relatives! How energetically the young creature behaved! He had seen his new acquaintance only in the dim light, but she must be beautiful. Her eyes, lips, and hair certainly were. How his heart throbbed as he asked himself the question whether this young girl, who was endowed with every gift which constituted the true worth of womanhood, was not preferable to her more attractive sister Barine!—when the thought darted through his mind that he had cause to be grateful to the beard which covered his chin and cheeks, for he felt that he, a sedate, mature man, must have blushed. And he knew why. Only half an hour before he had felt

and admitted to Dion that he considered Barine the most desirable of women, and now another's image cast a deep shadow over hers and filled his heart with new, perhaps stronger emotions.

He had had similar experiences only too often, and his friends, Dion at their head, had perceived his weakness and spoiled many an hour for him by their biting jests. The series of tall and short, fair and dark beauties who had fired his fancy was indeed of considerable length, and every one on whom he had bestowed his quickly kindled affections had seemed to him the one woman he must make his own, if he would be a happy man. But ere he had reached the point of offering his hand, the question had arisen in his mind whether he might not love another still more ardently. So he had begun to persuade himself that his heart yearned for no individual, but the whole sex—at least the portion which was young and could feel love—and therefore he would scarcely be wise to bind himself to any one. True, he knew that he was capable of fidelity, for he clung to his friends with changeless loyalty, and was ready to make any sacrifice in their behalf. With women, however, he dealt differently. Was Helena's image, which now floated before him so bewitchingly, destined to fade as swiftly? The contrary would have been remarkable. Yet he firmly believed that this time Eros meant honestly by him. The laughing loves who twined their rose garlands

around him and Helena's predecessors had nothing to do with this grave maiden.

These reflections darted through his brain with the speed of lightning, and still stirred his heart when he was ushered into the impluvium, where the magistrates were impatiently awaiting the owner of the house. With the lucidity peculiar to him, he explained his reasons for hoping that their errand would be vain, and Apollonius replied that no one would rejoice more than he himself if the Regent should authorize him, on the morrow, to countermand his mission. He would gladly wait there longer to afford the old man's granddaughter an opportunity to soften the tidings of the impending misfortune.

The kind-hearted man's patience, however, was not tested too long; for when Helena entered the summer-house Didymus had already been informed of the disaster which threatened him and his family. The philosopher Euphranor, an elderly member of the Museum, had reached him through the garden gate, and, spite of Philotas's warning sign, told him what was occurring. But Didymus knew the old philosopher, who, a recluse from the world like himself, was devoting the remainder of his life and strength to the pursuit of science. So he only shook his head incredulously, pushed back the thin locks of grey hair which hung down on his cheeks over the barest part of his skull, and exclaimed reproachfully, though as if the matter under dis-

cussion was of the most trivial importance: "What have you been hearing? We'll see about it!"

He had risen as he spoke, and too abruptly surprised by the news to remember the sandals on the mat and the upper robe which lay on a chest of drawers at the end of the room, he was in the act of quitting it, when his friend, who had silently watched his movements, stopped him, and Helena entered.

The grey-haired sage turned to her, and, vexed by his friend's doubts, begged her to convince her grandfather that even matters which do not please us may nevertheless be of some importance. She did so as considerately as possible, thinking meanwhile of the architect and his hopes.

Didymus, with his eyes bent on the ground, shook his grey head again and again. Then, suddenly raising it, he rushed to the door, and without heeding the upper garment which Helena still held in her hand, tore it open, shouting, "But things must and shall be changed!"

Euphranor and his granddaughter followed. Though his head was bowed, he crossed the little garden with a swift, firm tread, and, without noticing the questions and warnings of his companions, walked at once to the impluvium. The bright light dazzled his weakened eyes, and his habit of gazing into vacancy or on the ground compelled him to glance from side to side for some time, ere he could accustom himself to it. Apollonius ap-

proached, greeted him respectfully, and assured him that he deeply regretted having interrupted him in the work for which the whole world was waiting, but he had come on important business.

"I know, I know," the old scholar answered with a smile of superiority. "What is all this ado about?"

As he spoke he looked around the group of spectators, among whom he knew no one except Apollonius, who had charge of the museum accounts, and the architect, for whom he had composed the inscription on the Odeum, which he had recently built. But when his eyes met only unfamiliar faces, the confidence which hitherto had sustained him began to waver, though still convinced that a demand such as the philosopher suggested could not possibly be made upon him, he continued: "It is stated that there is a plan for turning my garden into a public square. And for what purpose? To erect a piece of sculpture. But there can be nothing serious in the rumour, for my property is recorded in the land register, and the law——"

"Pardon me," Apollonius broke in, "if I interrupt you. We know the ordinance to which you refer, but this case is an exceptional one. The Regent desires to take nothing from you. On the contrary, he offers, in the name of the Queen, any compensation you yourself may fix for the piece of land which is to be honoured by the statues of

the highest personages in the country—Cleopatra and Antony, hand in hand. The piece of sculpture has already been brought here. A work by the admirable artist Lysander, who passed too early to the nether world, certainly will not disfigure your house. The little summer-house by the sea must be removed to-morrow, it is true; you know that our gracious Queen may return any day—victorious if the immortals are just. This piece of sculpture, which is created in her honour, to afford her pleasure, must greet her on her arrival, so the Regent sent me to-day to communicate his wish, which, as he represents the Queen——"

"Yet," interrupted the architect, who had again warmly assured the old man's granddaughter of his aid—"yet your friends will endeavour to persuade the Regent to find another place for the statues."

"They are at liberty to do so," said the officer. "What will happen later the future will show. My office merely requires me to induce the worthy owner of this house and garden to submit to-day to the Queen's command, which the Regent and my own heart bid me clothe in the form of a request."

During this conversation the old man had at first listened silently to the magistrate's words, gazing intently into his face. So it was true. The demand to yield up his garden, and even the little house, for fifty years the scene of his study and creative work, for the sake of a statue, would

be made. Since this had become a certainty, he had stood with his eyes fixed upon the ground. Grief had paralyzed his tongue, and Helena, who felt this, for the aged head seemed as if it were bending under a heavy burden, had drawn close to his side.

The shouts and howls of the throng outside echoed through the open roof of the impluvium, but the old man did not seem to hear them, and did not even notice his granddaughter. Yet, no sooner did he feel her touch than he hurriedly shrank away, flung back his drooping head, and gazed around the circle of intruders.

The dull, questioning eyes of the old commentator and writer of many books now blazed with the hot fire of youthful passion and, like a wrestler who seeks the right grip, he measured Apollonius and his companions with wrathful glances. The fragile recluse seemed transformed into a warrior ready for battle. His lips and the nostrils of his delicate nose quivered, and when Apollonius began to say that it would be wise to remove the contents of the summer-house that day, as it would be torn down early the next morning, Didymus raised his arms, exclaiming:

"That will not be done. Not a single roll shall be removed! They will find me at work as usual early to-morrow morning, and if it is still your wish to rob me of my property you must use violence to attain your purpose."

"Calm yourself," replied Apollonius. "Every one beneath the moon must submit to a higher power; the gods bow to destiny, we mortals to the sovereign. You are a sage; I, merely mindful of the behests of duty, administer my office. But I know life, and if I may offer my counsel, you will accept what cannot be averted, and I will wager ten to one that you will have the best of it; that the Queen will place in your hands means——"

"Sufficient to build a palace on the site of the little house of which I was robbed," Didymus interrupted bitterly. Then rage burst forth afresh: "What do I care for your money? I want my rights, my good, guaranteed rights. I insist upon them, and whoever assails the ground which my grandfather and father bequeathed to me——"

He hesitated, for the throng outside had burst into a loud shout of joy; and when it died away, and the old man began once more defiantly to claim his rights, he was interrupted by a woman's clear tones, addressing him with the Greek greeting, "Rejoice!"—a voice so gay and musical that it seemed to dispel the depression which rested like a grey fog on the whole company.

While Didymus was listening to the excited populace, and the new-comer was gazing at the old man whose rigid obstinacy could scarcely be conquered by kindness, the younger men were looking at the beautiful woman who joined them. Her haste had flushed her cheeks, and from beneath

the turquoise-blue kerchief that covered her fair locks a bewitching face smiled at her sister, the architect, and her grandfather.

Apollonius and many of his companions felt as if happiness in person had entered this imperilled house, and many an eye brightened when the infuriated old man exclaimed in an altered tone, "You here, Barine?" and she, without heeding the presence of the others, kissed his cheek with tender affection.

Helena, Gorgias, and the old philosopher Euphranor, had approached her, and when the latter asked with loving reproach, "Why, Barine, how did you get through the howling mob?" she answered gaily: "That a learned member of the Museum may receive me with the query whether I am here, though from childhood a kind or—what do you think, grandfather?—a malign fate has preserved me from being overlooked, and some one else reprovingly asks how I passed through the shouting mob, as if it were a crime to wade into the water to hold out a helping hand to those we love best when it is up to their chins! But, oh! dear, this howling is too hideous!"

While speaking, she pressed her little hands on the part of the kerchief which concealed her ears, and said no more until the noise subsided, although she declared that she was in a hurry, and had only come to learn how matters were. Meanwhile it seemed as if she was so full of quick, pulsing life,

that it was impossible to leave even a moment unused, if it were merely to bestow or answer a friendly glance.

The architect and her sister were obliged to return hurried answers to hasty questions; and as soon as she ascertained what had brought the strangers there she thanked Apollonius, and said that old friends would do their best to spare her grandfather such a sorrow.

In reply to repeated inquiries from the two old men in regard to her arrival there, she answered: "Nobody will believe it, because in this hurry I could not keep my mouth shut; but I acted like a mute fish and reached the water." Then, drawing her grandfather aside, she whispered to him that, when she left her boat at the harbour, Archibius had seen her from his carriage, and instantly stopped it to inform her of his intended visit that evening. He was coming to discuss an important matter. Therefore she must receive the worthy man, whom she sincerely liked, so she could not stay. Then turning to the others—still with her kerchief on her head ready for departure—she asked what the people meant by their outcries. The architect replied that Philostratus had endeavoured to make the crowd believe that the only appropriate site for the statues of which she had heard was her grandfather's garden, and he thought he knew in whose behalf the fellow was acting.

"Certainly not in the Regent's," said Apol-

lonius, in a tone of sincere conviction; but Barine, over whose sunny brow a shadow had flitted when Gorgias uttered the orator's name, assented with a slight bend of the head, and then whispered hurriedly, yet earnestly, that she would answer for the old man's allowing himself to be persuaded, if he had only time to collect his thoughts.

The next morning, when the market was crowded, the officer might commence his negotiations afresh, if the Regent insisted on his plan. Meanwhile she would do her best to persuade her grandfather to yield, though he was not exactly one of the class who are easily guided. Apollonius might remind the Regent that it would be advisable at this time to avoid a public scandal, to remember Didymus's age, and the validity of his claim.

While Apollonius was talking with his companions, Barine beckoned to the architect, and hastily took leave of the others, protesting that she was in no danger, since she would slip away again like a fish, only this time she would use her tongue, and hoped by its means to win to the support of Didymus's just cause a man who would already have ended all the trouble had the Queen only been in Alexandria.

Until now the eyes and ears of the whole company had been fixed upon Barine. No one had desired anything better than to gaze at and listen to her.

Not until she had quitted the room with Gorgias

did the officials discuss the matter together, and soon after Apollonius went away with his companions, to hold another conference with the Regent about this unpleasant business. This time the architect had followed the young beauty with very mingled feelings. Only an hour before he would have rejoiced to be permitted to accompany and protect Barine; now he would have gladly remained with her sister, who had returned his farewell greeting so gratefully and yet with such maidenly modesty. But even the most vacillating man cannot change one fancy for another as he would replace a black piece on the draught-board with a white one, and he still found it delightful to be so near Barine. Only the thought that Helena might believe that he stood on very intimate terms with her sister had darted with a disquieting influence through his brain when the latter invited him to accompany her.

In the garden Barine begged him, before they went to the landing-place where the boat was moored, to help her ascend the narrow flight of steps leading to the flat roof of the gatekeeper's little house.

Here they could watch unseen the tumult in the square below, for it was surrounded by dense laurel bushes. Bright flames were blazing in the pitch-pans before the two temples at the side of the Corner of the Muses, and their light was increased by the torches held in the hands of Scythi-

ans. Yet no individuals could be distinguished in the throng. The marble walls of the temples shimmered, the statues at Didymus's gate, and the hermæ along the street of the King which passed the threatened house and connected the north of the Corner of the Muses with the sea-shore, loomed from the darkness in the brilliancy of the reflected light, but the smoke of the torches darkened the sky and dimmed the starlight.

The only persons distinctly visible were Dion, who had stationed himself on the lofty framework of the platform on which the muffled statues had been drawn hither, and the attorney Philostratus, who stood on the pedestal of one of the dolphins which surrounded the fountain between the Temple of Isis and the street. The space, a dozen paces wide, which divided them, permitted the antagonists to understand each other, and the attention of the whole throng was fixed upon the wranglers.

These verbal battles were one of the greatest pleasures of the Alexandrians, and they greeted every clever turn of speech with shouts of applause, every word which displeased them with groans, hisses, and cat-calls.

Barine could see and hear what was passing below. She had pushed aside the foliage of the laurel bushes which concealed her, and, with her hand raised to her ear, stood listening to the two disputants. When the scoundrel whom she had called husband, and for whom her contempt had

become too deep for hate, sneeringly assailed her family as having been fed from generation to generation from the corn-bin of the Museum, she bit her lips. But they soon curled, as if what she heard aroused her disgust, for the speaker now turned to Dion and accused him of preventing the kindly disposed Regent from increasing the renown of the great Queen and affording her noble heart a pleasure.

"My tongue," he cried, "is the tool which supports me. Why am I using it here till it is weary and almost paralyzed? In honour of Cleopatra, our illustrious Queen, and her generous friend, to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude. Let all who love her and the divine Antony, the new Herakles and Dionysus—both will soon make their entry among us crowned with the laurels of victory—join the Regent and every well-disposed person in seizing yonder bit of land so meanly withheld by base avarice and a sentiment—a sentiment, do you hear?—which I do not name more plainly, simply because wickedness is repulsive to me, and I do not stand here as an accuser. Whoever upholds the word-monger who spouts forth books as the dolphin at my side does water, may do so. I shall not envy him. But first look at Didymus's ally and panegyrist. There he stands opposite to me. It would have been better for him had the dolphin at his feet taught him silence. Then he might have remained in the obscurity which befits him.

But whether willing or not, I must drag him forth, and I will show you Dion, fellow-citizens, though I would far rather have you see things which arouse less ire. The dim light prevents your distinguishing the colour of his robe, but I know it, for I saw it in the glare of day. It is hyacinthine purple. You know what that costs. It would support the wives and children of many among you for ten long years. 'How heavy must be the purse which can expose such a treasure to sun and rain!' is the thought of every one who sees him strutting about as proudly as a peacock. And his purse *is* loaded with many talents. Only it is a pity that, day after day, most of you must give your children a little less bread and deprive yourselves of many a draught of wine to deck him out so bravely. His father, Eumenes, was a tax-collector, and what the leech extorted from you and your children, the son now uses to drive, clad in hyacinthine purple, a four-horse chariot, which splashes the mire from the street into your faces as it rolls onward. By the dog! the gentleman does not weigh so very much, yet he needs four horses to drag him. And, fellow-citizens, do you know why? I'll tell you. He's afraid of sticking fast everywhere, even in his speech."

Here Philostratus lowered his voice, for the phrase "sticking fast" had drawn a laugh from some of his hearers; but Dion, whose father had really amassed, in the high position of a receiver

of taxes, the handsome fortune which his son possessed, did not delay his reply.

"Yes, yes," he retorted scornfully, "yonder Syrian babbler hit the mark this time. He stands before me, and who does not easily stick fast when marsh and mire are so near? As for the hyacinthine purple cloak, I wear it because I like it. His crocus-yellow one is less to my taste, though he certainly looks fine enough in it in the sunlight. It shines like a buttercup in the grass. You know the plant. When it fades—and I ask whether you think Philostratus looks like a bud—when it fades, it leaves a hollow spiral ball which a child's breath could blow away. Suppose in future we should call the round buttercup seed-vessels 'Philostratus heads'? You like the suggestion? I am glad, fellow-citizens, and I thank you. It proves your good taste. Then we will stick to the comparison. Every head contains a tongue, and Philostratus says that his is the tool which supports him."

"Hear the money-bag, the despiser of the people!" interrupted Philostratus furiously. "The honest toil by which a citizen earns a livelihood is a disgrace in his eyes."

"*Honest* toil, my good friend," replied Dion, "is scarcely in question here. I spoke only of *your* tongue.—You understand me, fellow-citizens. Or, if any of you are not yet acquainted with this worthy man, I will show him to you, for I know him well. He is my foe, yet I can sincerely recom-

mend him to many of you. If any one has a very bad, shamefully corrupt cause to bring before the courts, I most earnestly counsel him to apply to the buttercup man perched on yonder fountain. He will thank me for it. Believe me, Didymus's cause is just, precisely because this advocate so eagerly assails it. I told you just now the matter under discussion. Which of you who owns a garden can say in future, 'It is mine,' if, during the absence of the Queen, it is allowable to take it away to be used for any other purpose? But this is what threatens Didymus. If this is to be the custom here, let every one beware of sowing a radish or planting a bush or a tree, for should the wife of some great noble desire to dry her linen there, he may be deprived of it ere the former can ripen or the latter give shade."

Loud applause followed this sentence, but Philostratus shouted in a voice that echoed far and wide: "Hear me, fellow-citizens; do not allow yourselves to be deceived! No one is to be robbed here. The project is to purchase, at a high price, the spot which the city needs for her adornment, and to honour and please the Queen. Are the Regent and the citizens to lose this opportunity of expressing the gratitude of years, and the rejoicing over the greatest of victories, of which we shall soon hear, because an evil-disposed person—the word must be uttered—a foe to his country, opposes it?"

"Now the mire is coming too near me," Dion angrily responded, "and I might really stick fast, as I was warned; for I do not envy the ready presence of mind of any person whose tongue would not falter when the basest slander scattered its venom over him. You all know, fellow-citizens, through how many generations the Didymus family has lived to the honour of this city, doing praiseworthy work in yonder house. You know that the good old man who dwells there was one of the teachers of the royal children."

"And yet," cried Philostratus, "only the day before yesterday he walked arm in arm in the Paneum garden with Arius, the tutor of Octavianus, our own and our Queen's most hated foe. In my presence, and before I know not how many others, Didymus distinguished this Arius as his most beloved pupil."

"To give you that title," retorted Dion, "would certainly fill any teacher with shame and anger, no matter how far you had surpassed him in wisdom and knowledge. Nay, had you been committed to the care of the herring dealers, instead of the rhetoricians, every honest man among them would disown you, for they sell only good wares for good money, while you give the poorest in exchange for glittering gold. This time you trample under foot the fair name of an honourable man. But I will not suffer it; and you hear, fellow-citizens, I now challenge this Syrian to prove that Didymus ever

betrayed his native land, or I will brand him in your presence a base slanderer, an infamous, venal destroyer of character!"

"An insult from such lips is easily borne," replied Philostratus in a tone of scornful superiority; but there was a pause ere he again turned to the listening throng, and with all the warmth he could throw into his voice continued: "What do I desire, then, fellow-citizens? What is the sole object of my words? I stand here with clean hands, impelled solely by the impulse of my heart, to plead for the Queen. In order to secure the only suitable site for the statues to be erected to Cleopatra's honour and fame, I enter into judgment with her foes, expose myself to the insult with which boastful insolence is permitted to vent its wrath upon me. But I am not dismayed, though, in pursuing this course, I am acting against the law of Nature; for the infamous man against whom I raise my voice was my teacher, too, and ere he turned from the path of right and virtue—under influences which I will not mention here—he numbered me also, in the presence of many witnesses, among his best pupils. I was certainly one of the most grateful—I chose his granddaughter—the truth must be spoken—for my wife. The possession——"

"Possession!" interrupted Dion in a loud, excited tone. "The corpse cast ashore by the waves might as well boast possession of the sea!"

The dim torchlight was sufficient to reveal Philostratus's pallor to the bystanders. For a moment the orator seemed to lose his self-control, but he quickly recovered himself, and shouted: "Fellow-citizens, dear friends! I was about to make you witnesses of the misery which a woman, whose wickedness is even greater than her beauty, brought upon an inexperienced——"

But he went no further; for his hearers—many of whom knew the brilliant, generous Dion, and Barine, the fair singer at the last Adonis festival—gave the orator tokens of their indignation, which were all the more pitiless because of the pleasure they felt in seeing an expert vanquished by an untrained foe. The wordy war would not have ended so quickly, however, had not restlessness and alarm taken possession of the crowd. The shout, "Back! disperse!" ran through the multitude, and directly after the trampling of hoofs and the commands of the leader of a troop of Libyan cavalry were heard. The matter at stake was not sufficiently important to induce the populace to offer an armed force resistance which might have entailed serious danger. Besides, the blustering war of tongues had reached a merry close, and loud laughter blended with the shouts of fear and warning; for the surging throng had swept with unexpected speed towards the fountain and plunged Philostratus into the basin. Whether this was due to the wrath of some enemy, or to mere accident, could not be learned; the vain

efforts of the luckless man to crawl out of the water up the smooth marble were so comical, and his gestures, after helping hands had dragged him dripping upon the pavement of the square, were so irresistibly funny, that more laughing than angry voices were heard, especially when some one cried, "His hands were soiled by blackening Didymus, so the washing will do him good." "Some wise physicians flung him into the water," retorted another; "he needed the cold application after the blows Dion dealt him."

The Regent, who had sent the troop of horsemen to drive the crowd away from Didymus's house, might well be pleased that the violent measure encountered so little resistance.

The throng quickly scattered, and was speedily attracted by something new at the Theatre of Dionysus—the zither-player Anaxenor had just announced from its steps that Cleopatra and Antony had won the most brilliant victory, and had sung to the accompaniment of his lute a hymn which had deeply stirred all hearts. He had composed it long before, and seized the first opportunity—the report had reached his ears while breakfasting in Kanopus—to try its effect.

As soon as the square began to empty, Barine left her post of observation. It was long since her heart had throbbed so violently. Not one of the many suitors for her favour had been so dear to her as Dion; but she now felt that she loved him.

What he had just done for her and her grandfather was worthy of the deepest gratitude; it proved that he did not come to her house, like most of her guests, merely to while away the evening hours.

It had been no small matter for the young aristocrat, in the presence of the whole multitude, to enter into a debate with the infamous Philostratus, and how well he had succeeded in silencing the dreaded orator! Besides, Dion had even taken her part against his own powerful uncle, and perhaps by his deed drawn upon himself the hostility of his enemy's brother, Alexas, Antony's powerful favourite. Barine might assure herself that he, who was the peer of any Macedonian noble in the city, would have done this for no one else.

She felt as if the act had ransomed her.

When, after an unhappy marriage and many desolate days, she had regained her former bright cheerfulness and saw her house become the centre of the intellectual life of the city, she had striven until now to extend the same welcome to all her guests. She had perceived that she ought not to give any one the power over her which is possessed by the man who knows that he is beloved, and even to Dion she had granted little more than to the others. But now she saw plainly that she would resign the pleasure of being a universally admired woman, whose modest home attracted the most distinguished men in the city, for the far greater hap-

piness which would be hers as Dion's beloved wife. With him, cherished by his love, she believed that she could find far greater joy in solitude than in the gay course of her present life.

She knew now what she must do if Dion sought her, and the architect, for the first time, found her a silent companion. He had willingly accompanied her back to her grandfather's house, where he had again met her sister Helena, while she had quitted it disappointed, because her brave defender had not returned there.

After the interruption of the debate Dion had been in a very cheerful mood. The pleasant sensation of having championed a good cause, and the delightful consciousness of success were not new to him, but he had rarely felt so uplifted as now. He most ardently longed for his next meeting with Barine, and imagined how he would describe what had happened and claim her gratitude for his friendly service. The scene had risen clearly before his mind, but scarcely had the radiant vision of the future faded when the unusually bright expression of his manly face was clouded by a grave and troubled one.

The darkness of the night, illumined only by the flare of the pitch-pans, had surrounded him, yet it had seemed as if he were standing with Barine in the full light of noon in the blossoming garden of his own palace, and, after asking a reward for his sturdy championship, she had clung

to him with deep emotion, and he had passionately kissed her tearful face.

The face had quickly vanished, yet it had been as distinct as the most vivid picture in a dream.

Was Barine more to him than he supposed? Had he not been drawn to her, during the past few months, by the mere charm of her pliant intellect and her bright beauty? Had a new, strong passion awakened within him? Was he in danger of seeing the will which urged him to preserve his freedom conquered? Had he cause to fear that some day, constrained by a mysterious, invincible power, in defiance of the opposition of calm reason, he might perhaps bind himself for life to this Barine, the woman who had once been the wife of a Philostratus, and who bestowed her smiles on all who found admittance to her house seeking a feast for the eye, a banquet for the ear, a pleasant entertainment?

Though her honor was as stainless as the breast of a swan—and he had no reason to doubt it—she would still be classed with Aspasia and other women whose guests sought more than songs and agreeable conversations. The gifts with which the gods had so lavishly endowed her had already been shared with too many to permit him, the last scion of a noble Macedonian house, to think of leading her, as mistress, to the palace whose erection he had so carefully and successfully planned with Gorgias.

Surely it lacked nothing save the gracious rule of a mistress.

But if she should consent to become his without the blessing of Hymen? No.

He could not thus dishonor the granddaughter of Didymus, the man who had been his father's revered teacher, a woman whom he had always rejoiced that, spite of the gay freedom with which she received so many admirers, he could still esteem. He would not do so, though his friends would have greeted such scruples with a smile of superiority. Who revered the sacredness of marriage in a city whose queen was openly living for the second time with the husband of another? Dion himself had formed many a brief connection, but for that very reason he could not place a woman like Barine on the same footing with those whose love he had perhaps owed solely to his wealth. He had never lacked courage and resolution, but he felt that this time he would have to resist a power with which he had never coped.

That accursed face! Again and again it rose before his mental vision, smiling and beckoning so sweetly that the day must come when the yearning to realize the dream would conquer all opposition. If he remained near her he would inevitably do what he might afterwards regret, and therefore he would fain have offered a sacrifice to Peitho to induce her to enhance Archibius's powers of persuasion and induce Barine to leave

Alexandria. It would be hard for him to part from her, yet much would be gained if she went into the country. Between the present and the distant period of a second meeting lay respite from peril, and perhaps the possibility of victory. Dion did not recognize himself. He seemed as unstable as a swaying reed, because he had conquered his wish to re-enter old Didymus's house and encourage him, and passed on to his own home. But he would probably have found Barine still with her grandfather, and he would not meet her, though every fibre of his being longed for her face, her voice, and a word of gratitude from her beloved lips. Instead of joy, he was filled with the sense of dissatisfaction which overpowers a man standing at a crossing in the roads, who sees before him three goals, yet can be fully content with neither.

The Street of the King, along which he suffered himself to be carried by the excited throng, ran between the sea and the Theatre of Dionysus. The thought darted through his mind that his friend the architect desired to erect the luckless statues of the royal lovers in front of this stately building. He would divert his thoughts by examining the site which Gorgias had chosen.

The zither-player finished his hymn just as Dion approached the theatre, and the crowd began to disperse. Every one was full of the joyful tidings of victory, and one shouted to another what

Anaxenor, the favourite of the great Antony, who must surely know, had just recited in thrilling verse. Many a joyous Io and loud Evoë to Cleopatra, the new Isis, and Antony, the new Dionysus, resounded through the air, while bearded and smooth, delicate Greek and thick Egyptian lips joined in the shout, "To the Sebasteum!" This was the royal palace, which faced the government building containing the Regent's residence. The populace desired to have the delightful news confirmed, and to express, by a public demonstration, the grateful joy which filled every heart.

Dion, too, was eager to obtain certainty, and, though usually averse to mingling with the populace during such noisy outbursts of feeling, he was preparing to follow the crowd thronging towards the Sebasteum, when the shouts of runners clearing a passage for a closed litter fell upon his ear.

It was occupied by Iras, the Queen's trusted attendant. If any one could give accurate information, it was she; yet it would hardly be possible to gain an opportunity of conversing with her in this throng. But Iras must have had a different opinion; she had seen Dion, and now called him to her side. There were hoarse tones in her voice, usually so clear and musical, which betrayed the emotion raging in her breast as she assailed the young Macedonian noble with a flood of questions. Without giving him the usual greeting, she hastily desired to know what was exciting the peo-

ple, who had brought the tidings of victory, and whither the multitude was flocking?

Dion had found it difficult not to be forced from the litter while answering. Iris perceived this, and as they were just passing the Mæander, the labyrinth, which was closed after sunset, she ordered her bearers to carry the litter to the entrance, made herself known to the watchman, ordered the outer court to be opened, the litter to be placed there, and the bearers and runners to wait outside for her summons, which would soon be given.

This unusual haste and excitement filled Dion with just solicitude. She refused his invitation to alight and walk up and down, declaring that life offered so many labyrinths that one need not seek them. He, too, seemed to be following paths which were scarcely straight ones. "Why," she concluded, thrusting her head far out of the opening in the litter, "are you rendering it so difficult for the Regent and your own uncle to execute their plans, making common cause with the populace, like a paid agitator?"

"Like Philostratus, you mean, on whom I bestowed a few blows in addition to the golden guerdon received from your hand?"

"Ay, like him, for aught I care. Probably it was you, too, who had him flung into the water, after you had vented your wrath on him? You managed your cause well. What we do for love's sake

is usually successful. No matter, if only his brother Alexas does not rouse Antony against you. For my part, I merely desire to know why and for whom all this was done."

"For whom save the good old man who was my father's preceptor, and his just claim?" replied Dion frankly. "Moreover—for no site more unsuitable could be found than his garden—in behalf of good taste."

Iras laughed a shrill, short laugh, and her narrow, regularly formed face, which might have been called beautiful, had not the bridge of the straight delicate nose been too long and the chin too small, darkened slightly, as she exclaimed, "That is frank at least."

"You ought to be accustomed to that from me," replied Dion calmly. "In this case, however, the expert, Gorgias, fully shares my opinion. I heard that too. You are both the most constant visitors of—what is the woman's name?—the bewitching Barine."

"Barine?" repeated Dion, as if the mention of the name surprised him. "You take care, my friend, that our conversation does honour to its scene, the labyrinth. I speak of works of the sculptor's art, and you pretend that I am referring to what is most certainly a very successful living work from the creative hands of the gods. I was very far from thinking of the granddaughter of the old scholar for whom I interceded."

"Ay," she scornfully retorted, "young gentlemen in your position, and with your habits of life, always think of their fathers estimable teachers rather than of the women who, ever since Pandora opened her box, have brought all sorts of misfortunes into the world. But," she added, pushing back her dark locks from her high forehead, "I don't understand myself, how, with the mountain of care that now burdens my soul, I can waste even a single word upon such trifles. I care as little for the aged scholar as I do for his legion of commentaries and books, though they are not wholly unfamiliar to me. For any concern of mine he might have as many grandchildren as there are evil tongues in Alexandria, were it not that just at this time it is of the utmost importance to remove everything which might cast a shadow on the Queen's pathway. I have just come from the palace of the royal children at Lochias, and what I learned there. But that—I will not, I cannot believe it. It fairly stifles me!"

"Have you received bad news from the fleet?" questioned Dion, with sincere anxiety; but she only bent her head in assent, laying her fan of ostrich-plumes on her lips to enjoin silence, at the same time shivering so violently that he perceived it, even in the dusk. It was evident that speech was difficult, as she added in a muffled tone: "It must be kept secret—Rhodian sailors—thank the gods, it is still very doubtful—it cannot, must not be

true—and yet—the prattle of that zither-player, which has filled the multitude with joyous anticipation, is abominable—the great ones of the earth are often most sorely injured by those who owe them the most gratitude. I know you can be silent, Dion. You could as a boy, if anything was to be hidden from our parents. Would you still be ready to plunge into the water for me, as in those days? Scarcely. Yet you may be trusted, and, even in this labyrinth, I will do so. My heart is heavy. But not one word to any person. I need no confidant and could maintain silence even towards you, but I am anxious that you should understand me, you who have just taken such a stand. Before I entered my litter at Lochias, the boy returned, and I talked with him."

"Young Cæsarion loves Barine," replied Dion with grave earnestness.

"Then this horrible folly is known?" asked Iras excitedly. "A passion far deeper than I should ever have expected this dreamer to feel has taken possession of him. And if the Queen should now return—perhaps less successful than we desire—if she looks to those from whom she still expects pleasure, satisfaction, lofty deeds, and learns what has befallen the boy—for what does not that sun-bright intellect learn and perceive? He is dear to her, dearer than any of you imagine. How it will increase her anxiety, perhaps her suffering! With what good reason she will be angered against

those whom duty and love should have commanded to guard the boy!"

"And therefore," added Dion, "the stone of offence must be removed. Your first step to secure this object was the attack on Didymus."

He had judged correctly and perceived that, in her assault upon the old scholar, she had at first intended to play into the hands of the rulers, work against the old philosopher and his relatives, among whose number was Barine; for the Egyptian law permitted the relatives of those who were convicted of any crime against the sovereign or the government to be banished with the criminal. This attack upon an innocent person was disgraceful, yet every word Iras uttered made Dion feel, every feature of her face betrayed, that it was not merely base jealousy, but a nobler emotion, that caused her to assail the guiltless sage—love for her mistress, the desire which dominated her whole being to guard Cleopatra from grief and trouble in these trying times. He knew Iras's iron will and the want of consideration with which she had learned to pursue her purpose at the court. His first object was to protect Barine from the danger which threatened her; but he also wished to relieve the anxiety of Iras, the daughter of Krates, his father's neighbour, with whom he had played in boyhood and for whom he had never ceased to feel a tender interest.

His remark surprised her. She saw that her

plot was detected by the man whose esteem she most valued, and a loving woman is glad to recognize the superiority of her lover. Besides, from her earliest childhood—and she was only two years younger than Dion—she had belonged to circles where no quality was more highly prized than mental pliancy and keenness. Her dark eyes, which at first had glittered distrustfully and questioningly and afterwards glowed with a gloomy light, now gained a new expression. Her gaze sought her friend's with a tender, pleading look as, admitting his charge, she began: "Yes! Dion, the philosopher's granddaughter must not stay here. Or do you see any other way to protect the unhappy boy from incalculable misfortune? You know me well enough to be aware that, like you, I am reluctant to infringe another's rights, that except in case of necessity I am not cruel. I value your esteem. No one is more truthful, and yesterday you averred that Eros had no part in your visits to the much-admired young woman, that you joined her guests merely because the society you found at her house afforded a pleasant stimulus to the mind. I have ceased to believe in many things, but not in you and your words, and if hearing that you had taken sides with the grandfather, I fancied that you were secretly seeking the thanks and gratitude of the granddaughter, why—surely the atrocious maxim that Zeus does not hear the vows of lovers comes from you men

—why, suspicion again reared its head. Now you seem to share my opinion——"

"Like you," Dion interrupted, "I believe that Barine ought to be withdrawn from the boy's pursuit, which cannot be more unpleasant to you than to her. As Cæsarion neither can nor ought to leave Alexandria while affairs are so threatening, nothing is left except to remove the young woman —but, of course, in all kindness."

"In a golden chariot, garlanded with roses, if you so desire," cried Iras eagerly.

"That might attract attention," answered Dion, smiling and raising his hand as if to enjoin moderation. "Your mode of action does not please me, even now that I know its purpose, but I will gladly aid you to attain your object. Your crooked paths also lead to the goal, and perhaps one is less likely to stumble in them; but straight ways suit me better, and I think I have already found the right one. A friend will invite Barine to an estate far away from here, perhaps in the lake regions."

"You?" cried Iras, her narrow eyebrows suddenly contracting.

"Do you imagine that she would go with me?" he asked, in a faintly reproachful tone. "No. Fortunately, we have older friends, and at their head is one who happens to be your uncle and at the same time is wax in the hands of the Queen."

"Archibius?" exclaimed Iras. "Ah! if he could persuade her to do so!"

"He will try. He, too, is anxious about the lad. While we are talking here, he is inviting Barine to his estate. The country air will benefit her."

"May she bloom there like a young shepherdess!"

"You are right to wish her the best fortune; for if the Queen does not return victorious, the irritability of our Alexandrians will be doubled. When you laid hands on Didymus's garden, you were so busily engaged in building the triumphal arch that you forgot——"

"Who would have doubted the successful issue of this war?" cried Iras. "And they will, they will conquer. The Rhodian said that the fleet was scattered. The disaster happened on the Acharnanian coast. How positive it sounded! But he had it only at second and third hand. And what are mere rumours? The source of the false tidings is discovered later. Besides, even if the naval battle were really lost, the powerful army, which is far superior to Octavianus's forces, still remains. Which of the enemy's generals could cope with Antony on the land? How he will fight when all is at stake—fame, honour, sovereignty, hate, and love! Away with this fear, based on mere rumour! After Dyrrachium Cæsar's cause was deemed lost, and how soon Pharsalus made him master of the world! Is it worthy of a sensible person to suffer courage to be depressed by a sailor's gossip? And

yet—yet! It began while I was ill. And then the swallows on the Antonias, the admiral's ship. We have already spoken of it. Mardion and your uncle Zeno saw with their own eyes the strange swallows drive away those which had built their nest on the helm of the Antonias, and kill the young ones with their cruel beaks. An evil omen! I cannot forget it. And my dream, while I lay ill with fever far away from my mistress! But I have already lingered here too long. No, Dion, no. I am grateful for the rest here—I can now feel at ease about Cæsarion. Place the monument where you choose. The people shall see and hear that we respect their opposition, that we are just and friendly. Help me to turn this matter to the advantage of the Queen, and if Archibius succeeds in getting Barine away and keeping her in the country, then—if I had aught that seemed to you desirable it should be yours. But what does the petted Dion care for his fading playfellow?"

"Fading?" he repeated in a tone of indignant reproach. "Say rather the fully developed flower has learned from her royal friend the secret of eternal youth."

With a swift impulse of gratitude Iras bent her face towards him in the dusk, extending the slender white hand—next to Cleopatra's famed as the most beautiful at court—for him to kiss, but when he merely pressed his lips lightly on it with no shadow of tenderness, she hastily withdrew it, exclaiming

as if overwhelmed by sudden repentance: "This idle, hollow dalliance at such a time, with such a burden of anxiety oppressing the heart! It is unworthy, shameful! If Barine goes with Archibius, her time will scarcely hang heavy on his estates. I think I know some one who will speedily follow to bear her company.—Here, Sasis! the bearers! To the Tower of Nilus, before the Gate of the Sun!"

Dion gazed after her litter a short time, then passed his hand through his waving brown hair, walked swiftly to the shore and, without pausing long to choose, sprang into one of the boats which were rented for pleasure voyages. Ordering the sailors who were preparing to accompany him to remain on shore, he stretched the sail with a practised hand, and ran out towards the mouth of the harbour. He needed some strong excitement, and wished to go himself in search of news.

CHAPTER IV.

THE house facing the garden of the Paneum, where Barine lived, was the property of her mother, who had inherited it from her parents. The artist Leonax, the young beauty's father, son of the old philosopher Didymus, had died long before.

After Barine's unhappy marriage with Philostratus was dissolved, she had returned to her mother, who managed the affairs of the household. She too, belonged to a family of scholars and had a brother who had won high repute as a philosopher, and had directed the studies of the young Octavianus. This had occurred long before the commencement of the hostility which separated the heirs of Cæsar and Mark Antony. But even after the latter had deserted Octavia, the sister of Octavianus, to return to Cleopatra, the object of his love, and there was an open breach between the two rivals for the sovereignty of the world, Antony had been friendly to Arius and borne him no grudge for his close relations to his rival. The generous Roman had even given his enemy's former tutor a fine house, to show him that he was glad to have him in Alexandria and near his person.

The widow Berenike, Barine's mother, was warmly attached to her only brother, who often joined her daughter's guests. She was a quiet, modest woman whose happiest days had been passed in superintending the education of her children, Barine, the fiery Hippias, and the quiet Helena, who for several years had lived with her grandparents and, with faithful devotion, assumed the duty of caring for them. She had been more easily guided than the two older children; for the boy's aspiring spirit had often drawn him beyond his mother's control, and the beautiful, vivacious girl had early possessed charms so unusual that she could not remain unnoticed.

Hippias had studied oratory, first in Alexandria and later in Athens and Rhodes. Three years before, his uncle Arius had sent him with excellent letters of introduction to Rome to become acquainted with the life of the capital and try whether, in spite of his origin, his brilliant gifts of eloquence would forward his fortunes there.

Two miserable years with an infamous, unloved husband had changed the wild spirits of Barine's childhood into the sunny cheerfulness now one of her special charms. Her mother was conscious of having desired only her best good in uniting the girl of sixteen to Philostratus, whom the grandfather Didymus then considered a very promising young man, and whose advancement, in addition to his own talents, his brother Alexas, Antony's

favourite, promised to aid. She had believed that this step would afford the gay, beautiful girl the best protection from the perils of the corrupt capital; but the worthless husband had caused both mother and daughter much care and sorrow, while his brother Alexas, who constantly pursued his young sister-in-law with insulting attentions, was the source of almost equal trouble. Berenike often gazed in silent astonishment at the child, who, spite of such sore grief and humiliation, had preserved the innocent light-heartedness which made her seem as if life had offered her only thornless roses.

Her father, Leonax, had been one of the most distinguished artists of the day, and Barine had inherited from him the elastic artist temperament which speedily rebounds from the heaviest pressure. To him also she owed the rare gift of song, which had been carefully cultivated and had already secured her the first position in the woman's chorus at the festival of the great goddesses of the city. Every one was full of her praises, and after she had sung the Yalemos in the palace over the waxen image of the favourite of the gods, slain by the boar, her name was eagerly applauded. To have heard her was esteemed a privilege, for she sang only in her own house or at religious ceremonials "for the honour of the gods."

The Queen, too, had heard her, and, after the

Adonis festival, her uncle Arius had presented her to Antony, who expressed his admiration with all the fervour of his frank nature, and afterwards came to her house a second time, accompanied by his son Antyllus. Doubtless he would have called on her frequently and tested upon her heart his peculiar power over women, had he not been compelled to leave the city on the day after his last visit.

Berenike had reproved her brother for bringing the Queen's lover to Barine, for her anxiety was increased by the repeated visits of Antony's son, and still more aroused by that of Cæsarion, who was presented by Antyllus.

These youths were not numbered among the guests whose presence she welcomed and whose conversation afforded her pleasure. It was flattering that they should honour her simple home by their visits, but she knew that Cæsarion came without his tutor's knowledge, and perceived, by the expression of his eyes, what drew him to her daughter. Besides, Berenike, in rearing the two children, who had been the source of so much anxiety had lost the joyous confidence which had characterized her own youth. Whenever life presented any new phase, she saw the dark side first. If a burning candle stood before her, the shadow of the candlestick caught her eye before the light. Her whole mental existence became a chain of fears, but the kind-hearted woman loved her chil-

dren too tenderly to permit them to see it. Only it was a relief to her heart when some of her evil forebodings were realized, to say that she had foreseen it all.

No trace of this was legible in her face, a countenance still pretty and pleasing in its unruffled placidity. She talked very little, but what she did say was sensible, and proved how attentively she understood how to listen. So she was welcome among Barine's guests. Even the most distinguished received something from her, because he felt that the quiet woman understood him.

Before Barine had returned that evening, something had occurred which made her mother doubly regret the accident to her brother Arius the day before. On his way home from his sister's he had been run over by a chariot darting recklessly along the Street of the King, and was carried, severely injured, to his home, where he now lay helpless and fevered. Nor did it lessen his sufferings to hear his two sons threaten to take vengeance on the reckless fellow who had wrought their father this mischief, for he had reason to believe Antyllus the perpetrator of the deed, and a collision between the youths and the son of Antony could only result in fresh disaster to him and his, especially as the young Roman seemed to have inherited little of his father's magnanimous generosity. Yet Arius could not be vexed with his sons for stigmatizing, in the harshest terms, the conduct of the man

who had gone on without heeding the accident. He had cautioned his sister against the utterly unbridled youth whose father he had himself brought to her house. With what good reason he had raised his voice in warning was now evident. At sunset that very day several guests had arrived as usual, followed by Antyllus, a youth of nineteen. When the door-keeper refused to admit him, he had rudely demanded to see Barine, thrust aside the prudent old porter, who endeavoured to detain him, and, in spite of his protestations, forced his way into his dead master's work-room, where the ladies usually received their visitors. Not until he found it empty would he retire, and then he first fastened a bouquet of flowers he had brought to a statue of Eros in burnt clay, which stood there. Both the porter and Barine's waiting-maid declared that he was drunk; they saw it when he staggered away with the companions who had waited for him in the garden outside.

This unseemly and insulting conduct filled Berenike with the deepest indignation. It must not remain unpunished, and, while waiting for her daughter, she imagined what evil consequences might ensue if Antyllus were forbidden the house and accused to his tutor, and how unbearable, on the other hand, he might become if they omitted to do so.

She was full of sad presentiments, and as, with such good reason, she feared the worst, she cher-

ished a faint hope that her daughter might perhaps bring home some pleasant tidings; for she had had the experience that events which had filled her with the utmost anxiety sometimes resulted in good fortune.

At last Barine appeared, and it was indeed long since she had clasped her mother in her arms with such joyous cheerfulness.

The widow's troubled heart grew lighter. Her daughter must have met with something unusually gratifying, she looked so happy, although she had surely heard what had happened here; for her cloak was laid aside and her hair newly arranged, so she must have been to her chamber, where she was dressed by her loquacious Cyprian slave, who certainly could not keep to herself anything that was worth mentioning. The nimble maid had shown her skill that day.

"Any stranger would take her for nineteen," thought her mother. "How becoming the white robe and blue-bordered peplum are to her; how softly the azure bombyx ribbon is wound around the thick waves of her hair! Who would believe that no curling-irons had touched the little golden locks that rest so gracefully on her brow, that no paint-brush had any share in producing the rose and white hues on her cheek, or the alabaster glimmer of her arms? Such beauty easily becomes a Danae dower; but it is a magnificent gift of the gods! Yet why did she put on the bracelet which Antony

gave her after his last visit? Scarcely on my account. She can hardly expect Dion at so late an hour. Even while I am rejoicing in the sight of her beauty, some new misfortune may be impending."

So ran the current of her thoughts while her daughter was gaily describing what she had witnessed at her grandfather's. Meanwhile she had nestled comfortably among the cushions of a lounge; and when she mentioned Antyllus's unseemly conduct, she spoke of it, with a carelessness that startled Berenike, as a vexatious piece of rudeness which must not occur again.

"But who is to prevent it?" asked the mother anxiously.

"Who, save ourselves?" replied Barine.

"He will not be admitted."

"And if he forced his way in?"

Barine's big blue eyes flashed angrily, and there was no lack of decision in her voice as she exclaimed, "Let him try it!"

"But what power have we to restrain the son of Antony?" asked Berenike. "I do not know."

"I do," replied her daughter. "I will be brief, for a visitor is coming."

"So late?" asked the mother anxiously.

"Archibius wishes to discuss an important matter with us."

The lines on the brow of the older woman

smoothed, but it contracted again as she exclaimed inquiringly: "Important business at so unusual an hour! Ah, I have expected nothing good since early morning! On my way to my brother's a raven flew up before me and fluttered towards tne left into the garden."

"But I," replied Barine, after receiving, in reply to her inquiry, a favourable report concerning her uncle's health—"I met seven—there were neither more nor less; for seven is the best of numbers—seven snow-white doves, which all flew swifty towards the right. The fairest of all came first, bearing in its beak a little basket which contained the power that will keep Antony's son away from us. Don't look at me in such amazement, you dear receptacle of every terror."

"But, child, you said that Archibius was coming so late to discuss an important matter," rejoined the mother.

"He must be here soon."

"Then cease this talking in riddles; I do not guess them quickly."

"You will solve this one," returned Barine; "but we really have no time to lose. So—my beautiful dove was a good, wise thought, and what it carried in its basket you shall hear presently. You see, mother, many will blame us, though here and there some one may pity; but this state of things must not continue. I feel it more and more plainly with each passing day; and several

years must yet elapse ere this scruple becomes wholly needless. I am too young to welcome as a guest every one whom this or that man presents to me. True, our reception-hall was my father's work-room and you, my own estimable, blameless mother, are the hostess here; but though superior to me in every respect, you are so modest that you shield yourself behind your daughter until the guests think of you only when you are absent. So those who seek us both merely say, 'I am going to visit Barine'—and there are too many who say this—I can no longer choose, and this thought——"

"Child! child!" interrupted her mother joyfully, "what god met you as you went out this morning?"

"Surely you know," she answered gaily; "it was seven doves, and, when I took the little basket from the bill of the first and prettiest one, it told me a story. Do you want to hear it?"

"Yes, yes; but be quick, or we shall be interrupted."

Then Barine leaned farther back among the cushions, lowered her long lashes, and began: "Once upon a time there was a woman who had a garden in the most aristocratic quarter of the city—here near the Paneum, if you please. In the autumn, when the fruit was ripening, she left the gate open, though all her neighbours did the opposite. To keep away unbidden lovers of her nice

figs and dates, she fastened on the gate a tablet bearing the inscription: 'All may enter and enjoy the sight of the garden; but the dogs will bite any one who breaks a flower, treads upon the grass, or steals the fruit.'

"The woman had nothing but a lap-dog, and that did not always obey her. But the tablet fulfilled its purpose; for at first none came except her neighbours in the aristocratic quarter. They read the threat, and probably without it would have respected the property of the woman who so kindly opened the door to them. Thus matters went on for a time, until first a beggar came, and then a Phœnician sailor, and a thievish Egyptian from the Rhakotis—neither of whom could read. So the tablet told them nothing; and as, moreover, they distinguished less carefully between mine and thine, one trampled the turf and another snatched from the boughs a flower or fruit. More and more of the rabble came, and you can imagine what followed. No one punished them for the crime, for they did not fear the barking of the lap-dog, and this gave even those who could read, courage not to heed the warning. So the woman's pretty garden soon lost its peculiar charm; and the fruit, too, was stolen. When the rain at last washed the inscription from the tablet, and saucy boys scrawled on it, there was no harm done; for the garden no longer offered any attractions, and no one who looked into it cared to enter. Then the

owner closed her gate like the neighbours, and the next year she again enjoyed the green grass and the bright hues of the flowers. She ate her fruit herself, and the lap-dog no longer disturbed her by its barking."

"That is," said her mother, "if everybody was as courteous and as well bred as Gorgias, Lysias, and the others, we would gladly continue to receive them. But since there are rude fellows like Antyllus——"

"You have understood the story correctly," Barine interrupted. "We are certainly at liberty to invite to our house those who have learned to read our inscription. To-morrow visitors will be informed that we can no longer receive them as before."

"Antyllus's conduct affords an excellent pretext," her mother added. "Every fair-minded person must understand——"

"Certainly," said Barine, "and if you, shrewdest of women, will do your part——"

"Then for the first time we can act as we please in our own home. Believe me, child—if you only do not——"

"No ifs!—not this time!" cried the young beauty, raising her hand beseechingly. "It gives me such delight to think of the new life, and if matters come to pass as I hope and wish—then —do not you also believe, mother, that the gods owe me reparation?"

"For what?" asked the deep voice of Archibius, who had entered unannounced, and was now first noticed by the widow and her daughter.

Barine hastily rose and held out both hands to her old friend, exclaiming, "Since they bring you to us, they are already beginning the payment."

CHAPTER V.

An artist, especially a great artist, finds it easy to give his house an attractive appearance. He desires comfort in it, and only the beautiful *is* comfortable to him. Whatever would disturb harmony offends his eye, and to secure the noblest ornament of his house he need not invite any stranger to cross its threshold. The Muse, the best of assistants, joins him unbidden.

Leonax, Barine's father, had been thus aided to transform the interior of his house into a very charming residence. He had painted on the walls of his own work-room incidents in the life of Alexander the Great, the founder of his native city, and on the frieze a procession of dancing Cupids.

Here Barine now received her guests, and the renown of these paintings was not one of the smallest inducements which had led Antony to visit the young beauty and to take his son, in whom he wished to awaken at least a fleeting pleasure in art. He also knew how to prize her beauty and her singing, but the ardent passion which had taken possession of him in his mature years was for Cle-

opatra alone. He whose easily won heart and susceptible fancy had urged him from one commonplace love to another had been bound by the Queen with chains of indestructible and supernatural power. By her side a Barine seemed to him merely a work of art endowed with life and a voice that charmed the ear. Yet he owed her some pleasant hours, and he could not help bestowing gifts upon any one to whom he was indebted for anything pleasant. He liked to be considered the most generous spendthrift on earth, and the polished bracelet set with a gem, on which was carved Apollo playing on his lyre, surrounded by the listening Muses, looked very simple, but was really an ornament of priceless value, for the artist who made it was deemed the best stone-cutter in Alexandria in the time of Philadelphus, and each one of the tiny figures sculptured on the bit of onyx scarcely three fingers wide was a carefully executed masterpiece of the most exquisite beauty. Antony had chosen it because he deemed it a fitting gift for the woman whose song had pleased him. He had not thought of asking its value; indeed, only a connoisseur would have perceived it; and as the circlet was not showy and well became her beautiful arm, Barine liked to wear it.

Had not the war taken him away, Antony's second visit would certainly not have been his last. Besides the singing which enthralled him, the conversation had been gay and brilliant, and in addi-

tion to Leonax's paintings, he had seen other beautiful works of art which the former had obtained by exchanging with many distinguished companions.

Nor was there any lack of plastic creations in the spacious apartment, to which the flashing of the water poured by a powerful man from the goatskin bottle on his shoulder into a shell lent a special charm.

The master who had carved this stooping Nubian had also created the much-discussed statues of the royal lovers. The clay Eros, who with bent knee was aiming at a victim visible to himself alone, was also his work. Antony, when paying his second visit, had laughingly laid the garland he wore before "the greatest of human conquerors," while a short time ago his son Antyllus had rudely thrust his bouquet of flowers into the opening of the curved right arm which was drawing the string. In doing so the statue had been injured. Now the flowers lay unheeded upon the little altar at the end of the large room, lighted only by a single lamp; for the ladies had left it with their guest. They were in Barine's favourite apartment, a small room, where there were several pictures by her dead father.

Antyllus's bouquet, and the damage to the clay statue of Eros, had played a prominent part in the conversation between the three, and rendered Archibius's task easier.

Berenike had greeted the guest with a complaint of the young Roman's recklessness and unseemly conduct, to which Barine added the declaration that they had now sacrificed enough to Zeus Xenios, the god of hospitality. She meant to devote her future life to the modest household gods and to Apollo, to whom she owed the gift of song.

Archibius had listened silently in great surprise until she had finished her explanation and declared that henceforth she intended to live alone with her mother, instead of having her father's workshop filled with guests.

The young beauty's vivid imagination transported her to this new and quieter life. But, spite of the clear and glowing hues in which she described her anticipations, her grey-haired listener could not have believed in them fully. A subtle smile sometimes flitted over his grave, somewhat melancholy face—that of a man who has ceased to wrestle in the arena of life, and after severe conflict now preferred to stand among the spectators and watch others win or lose the prize of victory. Doubtless the wounds which he had received still ached, yet his sorrowful experiences did not prevent his being an attentive observer. The expression of his clear eyes showed that he mentally shared whatever aroused his sympathy. Whoever understood how to listen thus, and, moreover—the prominence of the brow above the nose showed it—was also a trained thinker, could not fail to be a

good counsellor, and as such he was regarded by many, and first of all by the Queen.

The wise deliberation, which was one of his characteristic traits, showed itself on this occasion also, for though he had come to persuade Barine to try a country residence, he refrained from doing so until she had exhausted the story of her own affairs and inquired the important cause of his visit.

In the principal matter his request was granted ere he made it. So he could begin with the query whether the mother and daughter did not think that the transition to the new mode of life could be effected more easily if they were absent from the city a short time. It would awaken comment if they should close their house against guests on the morrow, and as the true reason could not be given, many would be offended. If, on the contrary, they could resolve to quit the capital for a few weeks, many, it is true, would lament their decision, but what was alloted to all alike could be resented by no one.

Berenike eagerly assented, but Barine grew thoughtful. Then Archibius begged her to speak frankly, and after she had asked where they could go, he proposed his country estate.

His keen grey eyes had perceived that something bound her so firmly to the city that in the case of a true woman like Barine it must be an affair of the heart. He had evidently judged cor-

rectly, for, at his prediction that there would be no lack of visits from her dearest friends, she raised her head, her blue eyes sparkled more brightly, and when Archibius paused she turned to her mother, exclaiming gaily:

"We will go!"

Again the vivid imagination of the artist's daughter conjured the future before her in distinct outlines. She alone knew whom she meant when she spoke of the visitor she expected at Irenia, Archibius's estate. The name meant "The place of peace," and it pleased her.

Archibius listened smilingly; but when she began to assign him also a part in driving the little Sardinian horses and pursuing the birds, he interrupted her with the statement that whether he could speedily allow himself a pleasure which he should so keenly enjoy—that of breathing the country air with such charming guests—would depend upon the fate of another. Thank the gods, he had been able to come here with a lighter heart, because, just before his departure, he had heard of a splendid victory gained by the Queen. The ladies would perhaps permit him to remain a little longer, as he was expecting confirmation of the news.

It was evident that he awaited it in great suspense, and that his heart was by no means free from anxiety.

Berenike shared it, and her pleasant face, which

had hitherto reflected her delight at her daughter's sensible resolution, was now clouded with care as Archibius began: "The object of my presence here? You are making it very easy for me to attain it. If I deemed it honest, I could now conceal the fact that I had sought you to induce you to leave the city. I see no peril from the boyish insolence of the son of Antony. The point in question, child, is merely to put yourself out of the reach of Cæsarion."

"If you could place me in the moon, it would please me best, as far as he is concerned," replied Barine eagerly. "That is just what induced me to change our mode of life, since my door cannot be closed against the boy who, though still under a tutor, uses his rank as a key to open it. And just think of being compelled to address that dreamer, with eyes pleading for help, by the title of 'king'!"

"Yet what mighty impulse might not be slumbering in the breast of a son of Julius Cæsar and Cleopatra?" said Archibius. "And passion—I know, my child, that it is no fault of yours—has now awakened within him. Whatever the result may be, it must fill his mother's heart with anxiety. That is why it is needful to hasten your departure, and to keep your destination a secret. He will attempt no violence; but—he is the child of his parents—and some unexpected act may be anticipated from him."

"You startle me!" cried Barine. "You transform the cooing dove which entered my house into a dangerous griffin."

"As such you may regard him," said the other, warningly. "You will be a welcome guest, Barine, but I invited you, whom I have loved from your earliest childhood, the daughter of my dearest friend, not merely to do you a service at Irenia, but to save from grief or even annoyance the person to whom—who is not aware of it—I owe everything."

The words conveyed to both ladies the knowledge that, though they were dear to Archibius, he would sacrifice them, and with them, perhaps, all the rest of the world, for the peace and happiness of the Queen.

Barine had expected nothing else. She knew that Cleopatra had made the philosopher's son a wealthy man and the owner of extensive estates; but she also felt that the source of his loyal devotion to the Queen, over whom he watched like a tender father, was due to other causes. Cleopatra prized him also. Had he been ambitious, he could have stood at the helm of the ship of state, as Epitrop long ago, but—the whole city knew it—he had more than once refused to accept a permanent office, because he believed that he could serve his mistress better as an unassuming, unnoticed counsellor. Berenike had told Barine that the relations between Cleopatra and Archibius dated

back to their childhood, but she had learned no particulars. Various rumours were afloat which, in the course of time, had been richly adorned and interwoven with anecdotes, and Barine naturally lent the most ready credence to those which asserted that the princess, in her earliest youth, had cherished a childish love for the philosopher's son. Now her friend's conduct led her to believe it.

When Archibius paused, the young beauty assured him that she understood him; and as the alabaster hanging lamp and a three-branched light cast a brilliant glow upon the portrait which her father had painted of the nineteen-year-old Queen, and afterwards copied for his own household, she pointed to it, and, pursuing the current of her own thoughts, asked the question:

"Was she not marvellously beautiful at that time?"

"As your father's work represents her," was the reply. "Leonax painted the portrait of Octavia, on the opposite side, the same year, and perhaps the artist deemed the Roman the fairer woman." He pointed as he spoke to a likeness of Octavianus's sister, whom Barine's father had painted as the young wife of Marcellus, her first husband.

"Oh, no!" said Berenike. "I still remember perfectly how Leonax returned in those days. What woman might not have been jealous of his enthusiasm for the Roman Hera? At that time I had not seen the portrait, and when I asked

whether he thought Octavia more beautiful than the Queen, for whom Eros had inflamed his heart, as in the case of most of the beautiful women he painted, he exclaimed—you know his impetuous manner—'Octavia stands foremost in the ranks of those who are called "beautiful" or "less beautiful"; the other, Cleopatra, stands alone, and can be compared with no one.'"

Archibius bent his head in assent, then said firmly, "But, as a child, when I first saw her, she would have been the fairest even in the dance of the young gods of love."

"How old was she then?" asked Barine, eagerly.

"Eight years," he answered. "How far in the past it is, yet I have not forgotten a single hour!"

Barine now earnestly entreated him to tell them the story of those days, but Archibius gazed thoughtfully at the floor for some time ere he raised his head and answered: "Perhaps it will be well if you learn more of the woman for whose sake I ask a sacrifice at your hands. Arius is your brother and uncle. He stands near to Octavianus, for he was his intellectual guide, and I know that he reveres the Roman's sister, Octavia, as a goddess. Antony is now struggling with Octavianus for the sovereignty of the world. Octavia succumbed in the conflict against the woman of whom you desire to hear. It is not my place to judge her, but I may instruct and warn. Roman nations burn

incense to Octavia, and, when Cleopatra's name is uttered, they veil their faces indignantly. Here in Alexandria many imitate them. Whoever upholds shining purity may hope to win a share of the radiance emanating from it. They call Octavia the lawful wife, and Cleopatra the criminal who robbed her of her husband's heart."

"Not I!" exclaimed Barine eagerly. "How often I have heard my uncle say that Antony and Cleopatra were fired with the most ardent love for each other! Never did the arrows of Eros pierce two hearts more deeply. Then it became necessary to save the state from civil war and bloodshed. Antony consented to form an alliance with his rival, and, as security for the sincerity of the reconciliation, he gave his hand in marriage to Octavia, whose first husband, Marcellus, had just died—his hand, I say, only his hand, for his heart was captive to the Queen of Egypt. And if Antony was faithless to the wife to whom statecraft had bound him, he kept his pledge to the other, who had an earlier, better title. If Cleopatra did not give up the man to whom she had sworn fidelity forever, she was right—a thousand times right! In my eyes—no matter how often my mother rebukes me—Cleopatra, in the eyes of the immortals, is and always will be Antony's real wife; the other, though on her marriage day no custom, no word, no stroke of the stylus, no gesture was omitted, is the intruder in a bond of love

which rejoices the gods, however it may anger mortals, and—forgive me, mother—virtuous matrons."

Berenike had listened with blushing cheeks to her vivacious daughter; now with timid earnestness she interrupted: "I know that those are the views of the new times; that Antony in the eyes of the Egyptians, and probably also according to their customs, is the rightful husband of the Queen. I know, too, that you are both against me. Yet Cleopatra is in reality a Greek, and therefore —eternal gods!—I can sincerely pity her; but the marriage has been solemnized, and I cannot blame Octavia. She rears and cherishes, as if they were her own, the children of her faithless husband and Fulvia, his first wife, who have no claim upon her. It is more than human to take the stones from the path of the man who became her foe, as she does. No woman in Alexandria can pray more fervently than I that Cleopatra and her friend may conquer Octavianus. His cold nature, highly as my brother esteems him, is repellent to me. But when I gaze at Octavia's beautiful, chaste, queenly, noble countenance, the mirror of true womanly purity——"

"You can rejoice," Archibius added, completing the sentence, and laying his right hand soothingly on the arm of the excited woman, "only it would be advisable at this time to put the portrait elsewhere, and rest satisfied with confiding your

opinion of Octavia to your brother and a friend as reliable as myself. If we conquer, such things may pass; if not— The messenger tarries long—"

Here Barine again entreated him to use the time. She had only once had the happiness of being noticed by the Queen—just after her song at the Adonis festival. Then Cleopatra had advanced to thank her. She said only a few kind words, but in a voice which seemed to penetrate the inmost depths of her heart and bind her with invisible threads. Meanwhile Barine's eyes met those of her sovereign, and at first they roused an ardent desire to press her lips even on the hem of her robe, but afterwards she felt as if a venomous serpent had crawled out of the most beautiful flower.

Here Archibius interrupted her with the remark that he remembered perfectly how, after the song, Antony had addressed her at the same time as the Queen, and Cleopatra lacked no feminine weakness.

"Jealousy?" asked Barine, in astonishment. "I was not presumptuous enough to admit it. I secretly feared that Alexas, the brother of Philostratus, had prejudiced her. He is as ill-disposed towards me as the man who was my husband. But everything connected with those two is so base and shameful that I will not allow it to cloud this pleasant hour. Yet the fear that Alexas might have slandered me to the Queen is not groundless.

He is as shrewd as his brother, and through Antony, into whose favour he ingratiated himself, is always in communication with Cleopatra. He went to the war with him."

"I learned that too late, and am utterly powerless against Antony," replied Archibius.

"But was it not natural that I should fear he had prejudiced the Queen?" asked Barine. "At any rate, I imagined that I detected a hostile expression in her eyes, and it repelled me, though at first I had been so strongly attracted towards her."

"And had not that other stepped between you, you could not have turned from her again!" said Archibius. "The first time I saw her I was but a mere boy, and she—as I have already said—a child eight years old."

Barine nodded gratefully to Archibius, brought the distaff to her mother, poured water into the wine in the mixing vessel, and after at first leaning comfortably back among the cushions, she soon bent forward in a listening attitude, with her elbow propped on her knee, and her chin supported by her hand. Berenike drew the flax from the distaff, at first slowly, then faster and faster.

"You know my country-house in the Kanopus," the guest began. "It was originally a small summer palace belonging to the royal family, and underwent little change after we moved into it. Even the garden is unaltered. It was full of

shady old trees. Olympus, the leech, had chosen this place, that my father might complete within its walls the work of education entrusted to him. You shall hear the story. At that time Alexandria was in a state of turmoil, for Rome had not recognized the King, and ruled over us like Fate, though it had not acknowledged the will by which the miserable Alexander bequeathed Egypt to him like a field or a slave.

"The King of Egypt, who called himself 'the new Dionysus,' was a weak man, whose birth did not give him the full right to the sovereignty. You know that the people called him the 'flute-player.' He really had no greater pleasure than to hear music and listen to his own performances. He played by no means badly on more than one instrument, and, moreover, as a reveller did honour to the other name. Whoever kept sober at the festival of Dionysus, whose incarnate second self he regarded himself, incurred his deepest displeasure.

"The flute-player's wife, Queen Tryphœna, and her oldest daughter—she bore your name, Berenike—ruined his life. Compared with them, the King was worthy and virtuous. What had become of the heroes and the high-minded princes of the house of Ptolemy? Every passion and crime had found a home in their palaces!

"The flute-player, Cleopatra's father, was by no means the worst. He was a slave to his own

caprices; no one had taught him to bridle his passions. Where it served his purpose, even death was summoned to his aid; but this was a custom of the last sovereigns of his race. In one respect he was certainly superior to most of them—he still possessed a capacity to feel a loathing for the height of crime, to believe in virtue and loftiness of soul, and the possibility of implanting them in youthful hearts. When a boy, he had been under the influence of an excellent teacher, whose precepts had lingered in his memory and led him to determine to withdraw his favourite children—two girls—from their mother's sway, at least as far as possible.

"I learned afterwards that it had been his desire to confide the princesses wholly to my parents' care. But an invincible power opposed this. Though Greeks might be permitted to instruct the royal children in knowledge, the Egyptians would not yield the right to their religious education. The leech Olympus—you know the good old man—had insisted that the delicate Cleopatra must spend the coldest winter months in Upper Egypt, where the sky was never clouded, and the summer near the sea in a shady garden. The little palace at Kanopus was devoted to this purpose.

"When we moved there it was entirely unoccupied, but the princesses were soon to be brought to us. During the winter Olympus preferred the island of Philæ, on the Nubian frontier, because

the famous Temple of Isis was there, and its priests willingly undertook to watch over the children.

"The Queen would not listen to any of these plans. Leaving Alexandria and spending the winter on a lonely island in the tropics was an utterly incomprehensible idea. So she let the King have his way, and no doubt was glad to be relieved from the care of the children; for, even after her royal husband's exile from the city, she never visited her daughters. True, death allowed her only a short time to do so.

"Her oldest daughter, Berenike, who became her successor, followed her example, and troubled herself very little about her sisters. I heard afterwards that she was very glad to know that they were in charge of persons who filled their minds with other thoughts than the desire to rule. Her brothers were reared at Lochias by our countryman Theodotus, under the eyes of their guardian, Pothinus.

"Our family life was of course wholly transformed by the reception of the royal children. In the first place, we moved from our house in the Museum Square into the little palace at Kanopus, and the big, shady garden delighted us. I remember, as though it were but yesterday, the morning —I was then a boy of fifteen—when my father told us that two of the King's daughters would soon become members of the household. There

were three of us children—Charmian, who went to the war with the Queen, because Iras, our niece, was ill; I myself; and Straton, who died long ago. We were urged to treat the princesses with the utmost courtesy and consideration, and we perceived that their reception really demanded respect; for the palace, which we had found empty and desolate, was refurnished from roof to foundation.

"The day before they were expected horses, chariots, and litters came, while boats and a splendid state galley, fully manned, arrived by sea. Then a train of male and female slaves appeared, among them two fat eunuchs.

"I can still see the angry look with which my father surveyed all these people. He drove at once to the city, and on his return his clear eyes were as untroubled as ever. A court official accompanied him, and only that portion of the useless amount of luggage and number of persons that my father desired remained.

"The princesses were to come the next morning—it was at the end of February—flowers were blooming in the grass and on the bushes, while the foliage of the trees glittered with the fresh green which the rising sap gives to the young leaves. I was sitting on a strong bough of a sycamore-tree, which grew opposite to the house, watching for them. Their arrival was delayed and, as I gazed meanwhile over the garden, I

thought it must surely please them, for not a palace in the city had one so beautiful.

"At last the litters appeared; they had neither runners nor attendants, as my father had requested, and when the princesses alighted—both at the same moment—I knew not which way to turn my eyes first, for the creature that fluttered like a dragon-fly rather than stepped from the first litter, was not a girl like other mortals—she seemed like a wish, a hope. When the dainty, beautiful creature turned her head hither and thither, and at last gazed questioningly, as if beseeching help, into the faces of my father and mother, who stood at the gate to receive her, it seemed to me that such must have been the aspect of Psyche when she stood pleading for mercy at the throne of Zeus.

"But it was worth while to look at the other also. Was that Cleopatra? She might have been the elder, for she was as tall as her sister, but how utterly unlike! From the waving hair to every movement of the hands and body the former—it *was* Cleopatra—had seemed to me as if she were flying. Everything about the second figure, on the contrary, was solid, nay, even seemed to offer positive resistance. She sprang from the litter and alighted on the ground with both feet at once, clung firmly to the door, and haughtily flung back her head, crowned with a wealth of dark locks. Her complexion was pink and white, and her blue eyes sparkled brightly enough; but the expression

with which she gazed at my parents was defiant rather than questioning, and as she glanced around her red lips curled scornfully as though she deemed her surroundings despicable and unworthy of her royal birth.

"This irritated me against the seven-year-old child, yet I said to myself that, though it was very beautiful here—thanks to my father's care—perhaps it appeared plain and simple when compared with the marble, gold, and purple of the royal palace whence she came. Her features, too, were regular and beautiful, and she would have attracted attention by her loveliness among a multitude. When I soon heard her issue imperious commands and defiantly insist upon the fulfilment of every wish, I thought, in my boyish ignorance, that Arsinoë must be the elder; for she was better suited to wield a sceptre than her sister. I said so to my brother and Charmian; but we all soon saw which really possessed queenly majesty; for Arsinoë, if her will were crossed, wept, screamed, and raged like a lunatic, or, if that proved useless, begged and teased; while if Cleopatra wanted anything she obtained it in a different way. Even at that time she knew what weapons would give her victory and, while using them, she still remained the child of a king.

"No artisan's daughter could have been further removed from airs of majestic pathos than this embodiment of the most charming childlike grace;

but if anything for which her passionate nature ardently longed was positively refused, she understood how to attain it by the melody of her voice, the spell of her eyes, and in extreme cases by a silent tear. When to such tears were added uplifted hands and a few sweet words, such as, 'It would make me happy,' or, 'Don't you see how it hurts me?' resistance was impossible; and in afteryears also her silent tears and the marvellous music of her voice won her a victory in the decisive questions of life.

"We children were soon playmates and friends, for my parents did not wish the princesses to begin their studies until after they felt at home with us. This pleased Arsinoë, although she could already read and write; but Cleopatra more than once asked to hear something from my father's store of wisdom, of which she had been told.

"The King and her former teacher had cherished the highest expectations from the brilliant intellect of this remarkable child, and Olympus once laid his hand on my curls and bade me take care that the princess did not outstrip the philosopher's son. I had always occupied one of the foremost places, and laughingly escaped, assuring him that there was no danger.

"But I soon learned that this warning was not groundless. You will think that the old fool's heart has played him a trick, and in the magic garden of childish memories the gifted young girl

was transformed into a goddess. That she certainly was not; for the immortals are free from the faults and weaknesses of humanity."

"And what robbed Cleopatra of the renown of resembling the gods?" asked Barine eagerly.

A subtle smile, not wholly free from reproach, accompanied Archibius's reply: "Had I spoken of her virtues, you would hardly have thought of asking further details. But why should I try to conceal what she has displayed to the world openly enough throughout her whole life? Falsehood and hypocrisy were as unfamiliar to her as fishing is to the sons of the desert. The fundamental principles which have dominated this rare creature's life and character to the present day are two ceaseless desires: first, to surpass every one, even in the most difficult achievements; and, secondly, to love and to be loved in return. From them emanated what raised her above all other women. Ambition and love will also sustain her like two mighty wings on the proud height to which they have borne her, so long as they dwell harmoniously in her fiery soul. Hitherto a rare favour of destiny has permitted this, and may the Olympians grant that thus it may ever be!"

Here Archibius paused, wiped the perspiration from his brow, asked if the messenger had arrived, and ordered him to be admitted as soon as he appeared. Then he went on as calmly as before:

"The princesses were members of our household, and in the course of time they seemed like sisters. During the first winter the King allowed them to spend only the most inclement months at Philæ, for he was unwilling to live without them. True, he saw them rarely enough; weeks often elapsed without a visit; but, on the other hand, he often came day after day to our garden, clad in plain garments, and borne in an unpretending litter, for these visits were kept secret from every one save the leech Olympus.

"I often saw the tall, strong man, with red, bloated face, playing with his children like a mechanic who had just returned from work. But he usually remained only a short time, seeming to be satisfied with having seen them again. Perhaps he merely wished to assure himself that they were comfortable with us. At any rate, no one was permitted to go near the group of plane-trees where he talked with them.

"But it is easy to hide amid the dense foliage of these trees, so my knowledge that he questioned them is not solely hearsay.

"Cleopatra was happy with us from the beginning; Arsinoë needed a longer time; but the King valued only the opinion of his older child, his darling, on whom he feasted his eyes and ears like a lover. He often shook his heavy head at the sight of her, and when she gave him one of her apt replies, he laughed so loudly that the sound of his

deep, resonant voice was heard as far as the house.

"Once I saw tear after tear course down his flushed cheeks, and yet his visit was shorter than usual. The closed *harmamaxa* in which he came bore him from our house directly to the vessel which was to convey him to Cyprus and Rome. The Alexandrians, headed by the Queen, had forced him to leave the city and the country.

"He was indeed unworthy of the crown, but he loved his little daughter like a true father. Still, it was terrible, monstrous for him to invoke curses upon the mother and sister of the children, in their presence, and in the same breath command them to hate and execrate them, but to love and never forget him.

"I was then seventeen and Cleopatra ten years old. I, who loved my parents better than my life, felt an icy chill run through my veins and then a touch upon my heart like balsam, as I heard little Arsinoë, after her father had gone, whisper to her sister, 'We will hate them—may the gods destroy them!' and when Cleopatra answered with tearful eyes, 'Let us rather be better than they, very good indeed, Arsinoë, that the immortals may love us and bring our father back.'

"'Because then he will make you Queen,' replied Arsinoë sneeringly, still trembling with angry excitement.

"Cleopatra gazed at her with a troubled look.

Her tense features showed that she was weighing the meaning of the words, and I can still see her as she suddenly drew up her small figure, and said proudly, 'Yes, I will be Queen!'

"Then her manner changed, and in the sweetest tones of her soft voice, she said beseechingly, 'You won't say such naughty things again, will you?'

"This was at the time that my father's instruction began to take possession of her mind. The prediction of Olympus was fulfilled. True, I attended the school of oratory, but when my father set the royal maiden a lesson, I was permitted to repeat mine on the same subject, and frequently I could not help admitting that Cleopatra had succeeded better than I.

"Soon there were difficult problems to master, for the intellect of this wonderful child demanded stronger food, and she was introduced into philosophy. My father himself belonged to the school of Epicurus, and succeeded far beyond his expectations in rousing Cleopatra's interest in his master's teachings. She had been made acquainted with the other great philosophers also, but always returned to Epicurus, and induced the rest of us to live with her as a true disciple of the noble Samian.

"Your father and brother have doubtless made you familiar with the precepts of the Stoa; yet you have certainly heard that Epicurus spent the

latter part of his life with his friends and pupils in quiet meditation and instructive conversation in his garden at Athens. We, too—according to Cleopatra's wish—were to live thus and call ourselves 'disciples of Epicurus.'

"With the exception of Arsinoë, who preferred gayer pastimes, into which she drew my brother Straton—at that time a giant in strength—we all liked the plan. I was chosen master, but I perceived that Cleopatra desired the position, so she took my place.

"During our next leisure afternoon we paced up and down the garden, and the conversation about the chief good was so eager, Cleopatra directed it with so much skill, and decided doubtful questions so happily, that we reluctantly obeyed the brazen gong which summoned us to the house, and spent the whole evening in anticipating the next afternoon.

"The following morning my father saw several country people assembled before the secluded garden; but he did not have time to inquire what they wanted; for Timagenes, who shared the instruction in history—you know he was afterwards taken to Rome as a prisoner of war—rushed up to him, holding out a tablet which bore the inscription Epicurus had written on the gate of his garden: 'Stranger, here you will be happy; here is the chief good, pleasure.'

"Cleopatra had written this notice in large let-

ters on the top of a small table before sunrise, and a slave had secretly fastened it on the gate for her.

"This prank might have easily proved fatal to our beautiful companionship, but it had been done merely to make our game exactly like the model.

"My father did not forbid our continuing this pastime, but strictly prohibited our calling ourselves 'Epicureans' outside of the garden, for this noble name had since gained among the people a significance wholly alien. Epicurus says that true pleasure is to be found only in peace of mind and absence of pain."

"But every one," interrupted Barine, "believes that people like the wealthy Isidorus, whose object in life is to take every pleasure which his wealth can procure, are the real Epicureans. My mother would not have confided me long to a teacher by whose associates 'pleasure' was deemed the chief good."

"The daughter of a philosopher," replied Archibius, gently shaking his head, "ought to understand what pleasure means in the sense of Epicurus, and no doubt you do. True, those who are further removed from these things cannot know that the master forbids yearning for individual pleasure. Have you an idea of his teachings? No definite one? Then permit me a few words of explanation. It happens only too often that Epicurus is confounded with Aristippus, who places sensual pleasure above intellectual enjoyment, as

he holds that bodily pain is harder to endure than mental anguish. Epicurus, on the contrary, considers intellectual pleasure to be the higher one; for sensual enjoyment, which he believes free to every one, can be experienced only in the present, while intellectual delight extends to both the past and the future. To the Epicureans the goal of life, as has already been mentioned, is to attain the chief blessings, peace of mind, and freedom from pain. He is to practise virtue only because it brings him pleasure; for who could remain virtuous without being wise, noble, and just?—and whoever is all these cannot have his peace of mind disturbed, and must be really happy in the exact meaning of the master. I perceived long since the peril lurking in this system of instruction, which takes no account of moral excellence; but at that time it seemed to me also the chief good.

"How all this charmed the mind of the thoughtful child, still untouched by passion! It was difficult to supply her wonderfully vigorous intellect with sufficient sustenance, and she really felt that to enrich it was the highest pleasure. And to her, who could scarcely endure to have a rude hand touch her, though a small grief or trivial disappointment could not be averted, the freedom from pain which the master had named as the first condition for the existence of every pleasure, and termed the chief good, seemed indeed the first condition of a happy life.

"Yet this child, whom my father once compared to a thinking flower, bore without complaint her sad destiny—her father's banishment, her mother's death, her sister Berenike's profligacy. Even to me, in whom she found a second brother and fully trusted, she spoke of these sorrowful things only in guarded allusions. I know that she understood what was passing fully and perfectly, and how deeply she felt it; but pain placed itself between her and the 'chief good,' and she mastered it. And when she sat at work, with what tenacious power the delicate creature struggled until she had conquered the hardest task and outstripped Charmian and even me!

"In those days I understood why, among the gods, a maiden rules over learning, and why she is armed with the weapons of war. You have heard how many languages Cleopatra speaks. A remark of Timagenes had fallen into her soul like a seed. 'With every language you learn,' he had said, 'you will gain a nation.' But there were many peoples in her father's kingdom, and when she was Queen they must all love her. True, she began with the tongue of the conquerors, not the conquered. So it happened that we first learned Lucretius, who reproduces in verse the doctrines of Epicurus. My father was our teacher, and the second year she read Lucretius as if it were a Greek book. She had only half known Egyptian; now she speedily acquired it. During our stay at

Philæ she found a troglodyte who was induced to teach her his language. There were Jews enough here in Alexandria to instruct her in theirs, and she also learned its kindred tongue, Arabic.

"When, many years later, she visited Antony at Tarsus, the warriors imagined that some piece of Egyptian magic was at work, for she addressed each commander in his own tongue, and talked with him as if she were a native of the same country.

"It was the same with everything. She outstripped us in every branch of study. To her burning ambition it would have been unbearable to lag behind.

"The Roman Lucretius became her favourite poet, although she was no more friendly to his nation than I, but the self-conscious power of the foe pleased her, and once I heard her exclaim: 'Ah! if the Egyptians were Romans, I would give up our garden for Berenike's throne.'

"Lucretius constantly led her back to Epicurus, and awakened a severe conflict in her unresting mind. You probably know that he teaches that life in itself is not so great a blessing that it must be deemed a misfortune *not to live*. It is only spoiled by having death appear to us as the greatest of misfortunes. Only the soul which ceases to regard death as a misfortune finds peace. Whoever knows that thought and feeling end with life

will not fear death; for, no matter how many dear and precious things the dead have left here below, their yearning for them has ceased with life. He declares that providing for the body is the greatest folly, while the Egyptian religion, in which Anubis strove to strengthen her faith, maintained precisely the opposite.

"To a certain degree he succeeded, for his personality exerted a powerful influence over her; and besides, she naturally took great pleasure in mystical, supernatural things, as my brother Straton did in physical strength, and you, Barine, enjoy the gift of song. You know Anubis by sight. What Alexandrian has not seen this remarkable man?—and whoever has once met his eyes does not easily forget him. He does indeed rule over mysterious powers, and he used them in his intercourse with the young princess. It is his work if she cleaves to the religious belief of her people, if she who is a Hellene to the last drop of blood loves Egypt, and is ready to make any sacrifice for her independence and grandeur. She is called 'the new Isis,' but Isis presides over the magic arts of the Egyptians, and Anubis initiated Cleopatra into this secret science, and even persuaded her to enter the observatory and the laboratory——

"But all these things had their origin in our garden of Epicurus, and my father did not venture to forbid it; for the King had sent a message from Rome to say that he was glad to have Cleopatra

find pleasure in her own people and their secret knowledge.

"The flute-player, during his stay on the Tiber, had given his gold to the right men or bound them as creditors to his interest. After Pompey, Cæsar, and Crassus had concluded their alliance, they consented at Lucca to the restoration of the Ptolemy. Millions upon millions would not have seemed to him too large a price for this object. Pompey would rather have gone to Egypt himself, but the jealousy of the others would not permit it. Gabinius, the Governor of Syria, received the commission.

"But the occupants of the Egyptian throne were not disposed to resign it without a struggle. You know that meanwhile Queen Berenike, Cleopatra's sister, had been twice married. She had her miserable first husband strangled—a more manly spouse had been chosen by the Alexandrians for her second consort. He bravely defended his rights, and lost his life on the field of battle.

"The senate learned speedily enough that Gabinius had brought the Ptolemy back to his country; the news reached us more slowly. We watched for every rumour with the same passionate anxiety as now.

"At that time Cleopatra was fourteen, and had developed magnificently. Yonder portrait shows the perfect flower, but the bud possessed, if possible, even more exquisite charm. How clear and earnest was the gaze of her bright eyes! When

she was gay they could shine like stars, and then her little red mouth had an indescribably mischievous expression, and in each cheek came one of the tiny dimples which still delight every one. Her nose was more delicate than it is now, and the slight curve which appears in the portrait, and which is far too prominent in the coins, was not visible. Her hair did not grow dark until later in life. My sister Charmian had no greater pleasure than to arrange its wavy abundance. It was like silk, she often said, and she was right. I know this, for when at the festival of Isis, Cleopatra, holding the *sistrum*, followed the image of the goddess, she was obliged to wear it unconfined. On her return home she often shook her head merrily, and her hair fell about her like a cataract, veiling her face and figure. Then, as now, she was not above middle height, but her form possessed the most exquisite symmetry, only it was still more delicate and pliant.

"She had understood how to win all hearts. Yet, though she seemed to esteem our father higher, trust me more fully, look up to Anubis with greater reverence, and prefer to argue with the keen-witted Timagenes, she still appeared to hold all who surrounded her in equal favour, while Arsinoë left me in the lurch if Straton were present, and whenever the handsome Melnodor, one of my father's pupils, came to us, she fairly devoured him with her glowing eyes.

"As soon as it was rumoured that the Romans were bringing the King back, Queen Berenike came to us to take the young girls to the city. When Cleopatra entreated her to leave her in our parents' care and not interrupt her studies, a scornful smile flitted over Berenike's face, and turning to her husband Archelaus, she said scornfully, 'I think books will prove to be the smallest danger.'

"Pothinus, the guardian of the two princesses' brothers, had formerly permitted them at times to visit their sisters. Now they were no longer allowed to leave Lochias, but neither Cleopatra nor Arsinoë made many inquiries about them. The little boys always retreated from their caresses, and the Egyptian locks on their temples, which marked the age of childhood, and the Egyptian garments which Pothinus made them wear, lent them an unfamiliar aspect.

"When it was reported that the Romans were advancing from Gaza, both girls were overpowered by passionate excitement. Arsinoë's glittered in every glance; Cleopatra understood how to conceal hers, but her colour often varied, and her face, which was not pink and white like her sister's, but —how shall I express it?——"

"I know what you mean," Barine interrupted. "When I saw her, nothing seemed to me more charming than that pallid hue through which the crimson of her cheeks shines like the flame through yonder alabaster lamp, the tint of the peach through

the down. I have seen it often in convalescents. Aphrodite breathes this hue on the faces and figures of her favourites only, as the god of time imparts the green tinge to the bronze. Nothing is more beautiful than when such women blush."

"Your sight is keen," replied Archibius, smiling. "It seemed indeed as if not Eos, but her faint reflection in the western horizon, was tinting the sky, when joy or shame sent the colour to her cheeks. But when wrath took possession of her—and ere the King's return this often happened—she could look as if she were lifeless, like a marble statue, with lips as colourless as those of a corpse.

"My father said that the blood of Physkon and other degenerate ancestors, who had not learned to control their passions, was asserting itself in her also. But I must continue my story, or the messenger will interrupt me too soon.

"Gabinius was bringing back the King. But from the time of his approach with the Roman army and the auxiliary troops of the Ethnarch of Judea, nothing more was learned of him or of Antipater, who commanded the forces of Hyrkanus; every one talked constantly of the Roman general Antony. He had led the troops successfully through the deserts between Syria and the Egyptian Delta without losing a single man on the dangerous road by the Sirbonian Sea and Barathra, where many an army had met destruction. Not to Antipater, but to him, had the Jewish garrison

of Pelusium surrendered their city without striking a blow. He had conquered in two battles; and the second, where, as you know, Berenike's husband fell after a brave resistance, had decided the destiny of the country.

"From the time his name was first mentioned, neither of the girls could hear enough about him. It was said that he was the most aristocratic of aristocratic Romans, the most reckless of the daring, the wildest of the riotous, and the handsomest of the handsome.

"The waiting-maid from Mantua, with whom Cleopatra practised speaking the Roman language, had often seen him, and had heard of him still more frequently—for his mode of life was the theme of gossip among all classes of Roman men and women. His house was said to have descended in a direct line from Hercules, and his figure and magnificent black beard recalled his ancestor. You know him, and know that the things reported of him are those which a young girl cannot hear with indifference, and at that time he was nearly five lustra younger than he is to-day.

"How eagerly Arsinoë listened when his name was uttered! How Cleopatra flushed and paled when Timagenes condemned him as an unprincipled libertine! True, Antony was opening her father's path to his home.

"The flute-player had not forgotten his daughters. He had remained aloof from the battle, but

as soon as the victory was decided, he pressed on into the city.

"The road led past our garden.

"The King had barely time to send a runner to his daughters, fifteen minutes before his arrival, to say that he desired to greet them. They were hurriedly attired in festal garments, and both presented an appearance that might well gladden a father's heart.

"Cleopatra was not yet as tall as Arsinoë, but, though only fourteen, she looked like a full-grown maiden, while her sister's face and figure showed that in years she was still a child. But she was no longer one in heart. Bouquets for the returning sovereign had been arranged as well as haste permitted. Each one of the girls held one in her hand when the train approached.

"My parents accompanied them to the garden gate. I could see what was passing, but could hear distinctly only the voices of the men.

"The King alighted from the travelling chariot, which was drawn by eight white Median steeds. The chamberlain who attended him was obliged to support him. His face, reddened by his potations, fairly beamed as he greeted his daughters. His joyful surprise at the sight of both, but especially of Cleopatra, was evident. True, he kissed and embraced Arsinoë, but after that he had eyes and ears solely for Cleopatra.

"Yet his younger daughter was very beautiful.

Away from her sister, she would have commanded the utmost admiration; but Cleopatra was like the sun, beside which every other heavenly body pales. Yet, no; she should not be compared to the sun. It was part of the fascination she exerted that every one felt compelled to gaze at her, to discover the source of the charm which emanated from her whole person.

"Antony, too, was enthralled by the spell as soon as he heard the first words from her lips. He had dashed up to the King's chariot, and seeing the two daughters by their father's side, he greeted them with a hasty salute. When, in reply to the question whether he might hope for her gratitude for bringing her father back to her so quickly, she said that as a daughter she sincerely rejoiced, but as an Egyptian the task would be harder, he gazed more keenly at her.

"I did not know her answer until later; but ere the last sound of her voice had died away, I saw the Roman spring from his charger and fling the bridle to Ammonius—the chamberlain who had assisted the King from the chariot—as if he were his groom. The woman-hunter had met with rare game in his pursuit of the fairest, and while he continued his conversation with Cleopatra her father sometimes joined in, and his deep laughter was often heard.

"No one would have recognized the earnest disciple of Epicurus. We had often heard apt re-

plies and original thoughts from Cleopatra's lips, but she had rarely answered Timagenes's jests with another. Now she found—one could see it by watching the speakers—a witty answer to many of Antony's remarks. It seemed as if, for the first time, she had met some one for whom she deemed it worth while to bring into the field every gift of her deep and quick intelligence. Yet she did not lose for a moment her womanly dignity; her eyes did not sparkle one whit more brightly than during an animated conversation with me or our father.

"It was very different with Arsinoë. When Antony flung himself from his horse, she had moved nearer to her sister, but, as the Roman continued to overlook her, her face crimsoned, she bit her scarlet lips. Her whole attitude betrayed the agitation that mastered her, and I, who knew her, saw by the expression of her eyes and her quivering nostrils that she was on the point of bursting into tears. Though Cleopatra stood so much nearer to my heart, I felt sorry for her, and longed to touch the arm of the haughty Roman, who indeed looked like the god of war, and whisper to him to take some little notice of the poor child, who was also a daughter of the King.

"But a still harder blow was destined to fall upon Arsinoë; for when the King, who had been holding both bouquets, warned Antony that it was time to depart, he took one, and I heard him say in his deep, loud tones, 'Whoever calls such

flowers his daughters does not need so many others.' Then he gave Cleopatra the blossoms and, laying his hand upon his heart, expressed the hope of seeing her in Alexandria, and swung himself upon the charger which the chamberlain, pale with fury, was still holding by the bridle.

"The flute-player was delighted with his oldest daughter, and told my father he would have the young princess conveyed to the city on the day after the morrow. The next day he had things to do of which he desired her to have no knowledge. Our father, in token of his gratitude, should retain for himself and his heirs the summer palace and the garden. He would see that the change of owner was entered in the land register. This was really done that very day. It was, indeed, his first act save one—the execution of his daughter Berenike.

"This ruler, who would have seemed to any one who beheld his meeting with his children a warm-hearted man and a tender father, at that time would have put half Alexandria to the sword, had not Antony interposed. He forbade the bloodshed, and honoured Berenike's dead husband by a stately funeral.

"As the steed bore him away, he turned back towards Cleopatra; he could not have saluted Arsinoë, for she had rushed into the garden, and her swollen face betrayed that she had shed burning tears.

"From that hour she bitterly hated Cleopatra.

"On the day appointed, the King brought the princesses to the city with regal splendour. The Alexandrians joyously greeted the royal sisters, as, seated on a golden throne, over which waved ostrich-feathers, they were borne in state down the Street of the King, surrounded by dignitaries, army commanders, the body-guard, and the senate of the city. Cleopatra received the adulation of the populace with gracious majesty, as if she were already Queen. Whoever had seen her as, with floods of tears, she bade us all farewell, assuring us of her gratitude and faithful remembrance, the sisterly affection she showed me—I had just been elected commander of the Ephebi—" Here Archibius was interrupted by a slave, who announced the arrival of the messenger, and, rising hurriedly, he went to Leonax's workshop, to which the man had been conducted, that he might speak to him alone.

CHAPTER VI.

THE men sent by Archibius to obtain news had brought back no definite information; but a short time before, a royal runner had handed him a tablet from Iras, requesting him to visit her the next day. Disquieting, but fortunately as yet unverified tidings had arrived. The Regent was doing everything in his power to ascertain the truth; but he (Archibius) was aware of the distrust of the government, and everything connected with it, felt by the sailors and all the seafaring folk at the harbour. An independent person like himself could often learn more than the chief of the harbour police, with all his ships and men.

The little tablet was accompanied by a second, which, in the Regent's name, authorized the bearer to have the harbour chains raised anywhere, to go out into the open sea and return without interference.

The messenger, the overseer of Archibius's galley slaves, was an experienced man. He undertook to have the "Epicurus"—a swift vessel, which Cleopatra had given to her friend—ready for a

voyage to the open sea within two hours. The carriage should be sent for his master, that no time might be lost.

When Archibius had returned to the ladies and asked whether it would be an abuse of their hospitality, if—it was now nearly midnight—he should still delay his departure for a time, they expressed sincere pleasure, and begged him to continue his narrative.

"I must hasten," he hurriedly began, after eating the lunch which Berenike had ordered while he was talking with the messenger, "but the events of the next few years are hardly worth mentioning. Besides, my time was wholly occupied by my studies in the museum.

"As for Cleopatra and Arsinoë, they stood like queens at the head of all the magnificence of the court. The day on which they left our house was the last of their childhood.

"Who would venture to determine whether her father's restoration, or the meeting with Antony, had wrought the great change which took place at that time in Cleopatra?

"Just before she left us, my mother had lamented that she must give her to a father like the flute-player, instead of to a worthy mother; for the best could not help regarding herself happy in the possession of such a daughter. Afterwards her character and conduct were better suited to delight men than to please a mother. The yearn-

ing for peace of mind seemed over. Only the noisy festivals, the singing and music, of which there was never any cessation in the palace of the royal virtuoso, seemed to weary her and at such times she appeared at our house and spent several days beneath its roof. Arsinoë never accompanied her; her heart was sometimes won by a golden-haired officer in the ranks of the German horsemen whom Gabinius had left among the garrison of Alexandria, sometimes by a Macedonian noble among the youths who, at that time, performed the service of guarding the palace.

"Cleopatra lived apart from her, and Arsinoë openly showed her hostility from the time that she entreated her to put an end to the scandal caused by her love affairs.

"Cleopatra held aloof from such things.

"Though she had devoted much time to the magic arts of the Egyptians, her clear intellect had rendered her so familiar with the philosophy of the Hellenes that it was a pleasure to hear her converse or argue in the museum—as she often did—with the leaders of the various schools. Her self-confidence had become very strong. Though, while with us, she said that she longed to return to the days of the peaceful Garden of Epicurus, she devoted herself eagerly enough to the events occurring in the world and to statecraft. She was familiar with everything in Rome, the desires and struggles of the contending parties, as

well as the characters of the men who were directing affairs, their qualities, views, and aims.

"She followed Antony's career with the interest of love, for she had bestowed on him the first affection of her young heart. She had expected the greatest achievements, but his subsequent course seemed to belie these lofty hopes. A tinge of scorn coloured her remarks concerning him at that time, but here also her heart had its share.

"Pompey, to whom her father owed his restoration to the throne, she considered a lucky man, rather than a great and wise one. Of Julius Cæsar, on the contrary, long before she met him, she spoke with ardent enthusiasm, though she knew that he would gladly have made Egypt a Roman province. The greatest deed which she expected from the energetic Julius was that he would abolish the republic, which she hated, and soar upward to tyrannize over the arrogant rulers of the world—only she would fain have seen Antony in his place. How often in those days she used magic art to assure herself of his future! Her father was interested in these things, especially as, through them, and the power of the mighty Isis, he expected to obtain relief from his many and severe sufferings.

"Cleopatra's brothers were still mere boys, completely dependent upon their guardian, Pothinus, to whom the King left the care of the government, and their tutor, Theodotus, a clever but unprin-

cipled rhetorician. These two men and Achillas, the commander of the troops, would gladly have aided Dionysus, the King's oldest male heir, to obtain the control of the state, in order afterwards to rule him, but the flute-player baffled their plans. You know that in his last will he made Cleopatra, his favourite child, his successor, but her brother Dionysus was to share the throne as her husband. This caused much scandal in Rome, though it was an old custom of the house of Ptolemy, and suited the Egyptians.

"The flute-player died. Cleopatra became Queen, and at the same time the wife of a husband ten years old, for whom she did not even possess the natural gift of sisterly tenderness. But with the obstinate child who had been told by his counsellors that the right to rule should be his alone, she also married the former governors of the country.

"Then began a period of sore suffering. Her life was a perpetual battle against notorious intrigues, the worst of which owed their origin to her sister. Arsinoë had surrounded herself with a court of her own, managed by the eunuch Ganymedes, an experienced commander, and at the same time a shrewd adviser, wholly devoted to her interest. He understood how to bring her into close relations with Pothinus and other rulers of the state, and thus at last united all who possessed any power in the royal palace in an endeavour to

thrust Cleopatra from the throne. Pothinus, Theodotus, and Achillas hated her because she saw their failings and made them feel the superiority of her intellect. Their combined efforts might have succeeded in overthrowing her before, had not the Alexandrians, headed by the Ephebi, over whom I still had some influence, stood by her so steadfastly. Whoever could still be classed as a 'youth' glowed with enthusiasm for her, and most of the Macedonian nobles in the body-guard would have gone to death for her sake, though she had forced them to gaze hopelessly up to her as if she were some unapproachable goddess.

"When her father died she was seventeen, but she knew how to resist oppressors and foes as if she were a man. My sister, Charmian, whom she had appointed to a place in her service, loyally aided her. At that time she was a beautiful and lovable girl, but the spell exerted by the Queen fettered her like chains and bonds. She voluntarily resigned the love of a noble man—he afterwards became your husband, Berenike—in order not to leave her royal friend at a time when she so urgently needed her. Since then my sister has shut her heart against love. It belonged to Cleopatra. She lives, thinks, cares for her alone. She is fond of you, Barine, because your father was so dear to her. Iras, whose name is so often associated with hers, is the daughter of my oldest sister, who was already married when the King entrusted the

princesses to our father's care. She is thirteen years younger than Cleopatra, but her mistress holds the first place in her heart also. Her father, the wealthy Krates, made every effort to keep her from entering the service of the Queen, but in vain. A single conversation with this marvellous woman had bound her forever.

"But I must be brief. You have doubtless heard how completely Cleopatra bewitched Pompey's son during his visit to Alexandria. She had not been so gracious to any man since her meeting with Antony, and it was not from affection, but to maintain the independence of her beloved native land. At that time the father of Gnejus was the man who possessed the most power, and statecraft commanded her to win him through his son. The young Roman also took his leave 'full of her,' as the Egyptians say. This pleased her, but the visit greatly aided her foes. There was no slander which was not disseminated against her. The commanders of the body-guard, whom she had always treated as a haughty Queen, had seen her associate with Pompey's son in the theatre as if he were a friend of equal rank; and on many other occasions the Alexandrians saw her repay his courtesies in the same coin. But in those days hatred of Rome surged high. The regents, leagued with Arsinoë, spread the rumour that Cleopatra would deliver Egypt up to Pompey, if the senate would secure to her the sole sovereignty of the

new province, and leave her free to rid herself of her royal brother and husband.

"She was compelled to fly, and went first to the Syrian frontier, to gain friends for her cause among the Asiatic princes. My brother Straton —you remember the noble youth who won the prize for wrestling at Olympia, Berenike—and I were commissioned to carry the treasure to her. We doubtless exposed ourselves to great peril, but we did so gladly, and left Alexandria with a few camels, an ox-cart, and some trusted slaves. We were to go to Gaza, where Cleopatra was already beginning to collect an army, and had disguised ourselves as Nabatæan merchants. The languages which I had learned, in order not to be distanced by Cleopatra, were now of great service.

"Those were stirring times. The names of Cæsar and Pompey were in every mouth. After the defeat at Dyrrachium the cause of Julius seemed lost, but the Pharsalian battle again placed him uppermost, unless the East rose in behalf of Pompey. Both seemed to be favourites of Fortune. The question now was to which the goddess would prove most faithful.

"My sister Charmian was with the Queen, but through one of Arsinoë's maids, who was devoted to her, we had learned from the palace that Pompey's fate was decided. He had come a fugitive from the defeat of Pharsalus, and begged the King of Egypt—that is, the men who were acting in his

name—for a hospitable reception. Pothinus and his associates had rarely confronted a greater embarrassment. The troops and ships of the victorious Cæsar were close at hand; many of Gabinius' men were serving in the Egyptian army. To receive the vanquished Pompey kindly was to make the victorious Cæsar a foe. I was to witness the terrible solution of this dilemma. The infamous words of Theodotus, 'Dead dogs no longer bite,' had turned the scale.

"My brother and I reached Mount Casius with our precious freight, and pitched our tents to await a messenger, when a large body of armed men approached from the city. At first we feared that we were pursued; but a spy reported that the King himself was among the soldiery, and at the same time a large Roman galley drew near the coast. It must be Pompey's. So they had changed their views, and the King was coming in person to receive their guest. The troops encamped on the flat shore on which stood the Temple of the Casian Amon.

"The September sun shone brightly, and was reflected from the weapons. From the high bank of the dry bed of the river, where we had pitched our tent, we saw something scarlet move to and fro. It was the King's mantle. The waves, stirred by the autumn breeze, rippled lightly, blue as cornflowers, over the yellow sand of the dunes; but the King stood still, shading his eyes with his

hand as he gazed at the galley. Meanwhile, Achillas, the commander of the troops, and Septimius, the tribune, who belonged to the Roman garrison in Alexandria, and who, I knew, had served under Pompey and owed him many favours, had entered a boat and put off to the vessel, which could not come nearer the land on account of the shallow water.

"The conference now began, and Achillas's offer of hospitality must have been very warm and well calculated to inspire confidence, for a tall lady—it was Cornelia, the wife of the Imperator—waved her hand to him in token of gratitude."

Here the speaker paused, drew a long breath, and, pressing his hand to his brow, continued:

"What follows—alas, that it was my fate to witness the dreadful scene! How often a garbled account has been given, and yet the whole was so terribly simple!

"Fortune makes her favourites confiding. Pompey was also. Though more than fifty years old—he lacked two years of sixty—he sprang into the boat quickly enough, with merely a little assistance from a freedman. A sailor—he was a negro—shoved the skiff off from the side of the huge ship as violently as if the pole he used for the purpose was a spear, and the galley his foe. The boat, urged by his companions' oars, had already moved forward, and he stumbled, the brown cap falling from his woolly head in the act.

It seems as if I could still see him. Ere I clearly realized that this was an evil omen, the boat stopped.

"The water was shallow. I saw Achillas point to the shore. It could be reached by a single bound. Pompey looked towards the King. The freedman put his hand under his arm to help him rise. Septimius also stood up. I thought he intended to assist him. But no! What did this mean? Something flashed by the Imperator's silver-grey hair as if a spark had fallen from the sky. Would Pompey defend himself, or why did he raise his hand? It was to draw around him the toga, with which he silently covered his face. The tribune's arm was again raised high into the air, and then—what confusion! Here, there, yonder, hands suddenly appeared aloft, bright flashes darted through the clear air. Achillas, the general, dealt blows with his dagger as if he were skilled in murder. The Imperator's stalwart figure sank forward. The freedman supported him.

"Then shouts arose, here a cry of fury, yonder a wail of grief, and, rising above all, a woman's shriek of anguish. It came from the lips of Cornelia, the murdered man's wife. Shouts of applause from the King's camp followed, then the blast of a trumpet; the Egyptians drew back from the shore. The scarlet cloak again appeared. Septimius, bearing in his hand a bleeding head, went towards it and held the ghastly trophy aloft.

The royal boy gazed into the dull eyes of the victim, who had guided the destinies of many a battle-field, of Rome, of two quarters of the globe. The sight was probably too terrible for the child upon the throne, for he averted his head. The ship moved away from the land, the Egyptians formed into ranks and marched off. Achillas cleansed his blood-stained hands in the sea-water. The freedman beside him washed his master's headless trunk. The general shrugged his shoulders as the faithful fellow heaped reproaches on him."

Here Archibius paused, drawing a long breath. Then he continued more calmly :

" Achillas did not lead the troops back to Alexandria, but eastward, towards Pelusium, as I learned later.

" My brother and I stood on the rocky edge of the ravine. It was long ere either spoke. A cloud of dust concealed the King and his body-guard, the sails of the galley disappeared. Twilight closed in, and Straton pointed westward towards Alexandria. Then the sun set. Red! red! It seemed as if a torrent of blood was pouring over the city.

" Night followed. A scanty fire was glimmering on the strand. Where had the wood been gathered in this desert ? How had it been kindled ? A wrecked, mouldering boat had lain close beside the scene of the murder. The freedman and his companions had broken it up and fed the flames

with withered boughs, the torn garments of the murdered man, and dry sea-weed. A blaze soon rose, and a body was carefully placed upon the wretched funeral pyre. It was the corpse of the great Pompey. One of the Imperator's veterans aided the faithful servant."

Here Archibius sank back again among the cushions, adding in explanation:

"Cordus, the man's name was Servius Cordus. He fared well later. The Queen provided for him. The others? Fate overtook them all soon enough. Theodotus was condemned by Brutus to a torturing death. Amid his loud shrieks of agony one of Pompey's veterans shouted, 'Dead dogs no longer bite, but they howl when dying!'

"It was worthy of Cæsar that he averted his face in horror from the head of his enemy, which Theodotus sent to him. Pothinus, too, vainly awaited the reward of his infamous deed.

"Julius Cæsar had cast anchor before Alexandria shortly after the King's return. Not until after his arrival in Egypt did he learn how Pompey had been received there. You know that he remained nine months. How often I have heard it said that Cleopatra understood how to chain him here! This is both true and false. He was obliged to stay half a year; the following three months he did indeed give to the woman whom he loved. Ay, the heart of the man of fifty-four had again opened to a great passion. Like all wounds, those in-

flicted by the arrows of Eros heal more slowly when youth lies behind the stricken one. It was not only the eyes and the senses which attracted a couple so widely separated by years, but far more the mental characteristics of both. Two winged intellects had met. The genius of one had recognized that of the other. The highest type of manhood had met perfect womanhood. They could not fail to attract each other. I expected it; for Cleopatra had long watched breathlessly the flight of this eagle who soared so far above the others, and she was strong enough to keep at his side.

"We succeeded in joining Cleopatra, and heard that, spite of the hostility of our citizens, Cæsar had occupied the palace of the Ptolemies and was engaged in restoring order.

"We knew in what way Pothinus, Achillas, and Arsinoë would seek to influence him. Cleopatra had good reason to fear that her foes might deliver Egypt unconditionally to Rome, if Cæsar should leave the reins of government in their hands and shut her out. She had cause to dread this, but she also had the courage to act in person in her own behalf.

"The point now was to bring her into the city, the palace—nay, into direct communication with the dictator. Children tell the tale of the strong man who bore Cleopatra in a sack through the palace portals. It was not a sack which concealed her, but a Syrian carpet. The strong man

was my brother Straton. I went first, to secure a free passage.

"Julius Cæsar and she saw and found each other. Fate merely drew the conclusion which must result from such premises. Never have I seen Cleopatra happier, more exalted in mind and heart, yet she was menaced on all sides by serious perils. It required all the military genius of Cæsar to conquer the fierce hostility which he encountered here. It was this, not the thrall of Cleopatra, I repeat, which first bound him to Egypt. What would have prevented him—as he did later—from taking the object of his love to Rome, had it been possible at that time? But this was not the case. The Alexandrians provided for that.

"He had recognized the flute-player's will, nay, had granted more to the royal house than could have been given to the former. Cleopatra and her brother-husband, Dionysus, were to share the government, and he also bestowed on Arsinoë and her youngest brother the island of Cyprus, which had been wrested from their uncle Ptolemy by the republic. Rome was, of course, to remain the guardian of the brothers and sisters.

"This arrangement was unendurable to Pothinus and the former rulers of the state. Cleopatra as Queen, and Rome—that is Cæsar, the dictator, her friend, as guardian—meant their removal from power, their destruction, and they resisted violently.

"The Egyptians and even the Alexandrians supported them. The young King hated nothing more than the yoke of the unloved sister, who was so greatly his superior. Cæsar had come with a force by no means equal to theirs, and it might be possible to draw the mighty general into a snare. They fought with all the power at their command, with such passionate eagerness, that the dictator had never been nearer succumbing to peril. But Cleopatra certainly did not paralyze his strength and cautious deliberation. No! He had never been greater; never proved the power of his genius so magnificently. And against what superior power, what hatred he contended! I myself saw the young King, when he heard that Cleopatra had succeeded in entering the palace and meeting Cæsar, rush into the street, fairly crazed by rage, tear the diadem from his head, hurl it on the pavement, and shriek to the passers-by that he was betrayed, until Cæsar's soldiers forced him back into the palace, and dispersed the mob.

"Arsinoë had received more than she could venture to expect; but she was again most deeply angered. After Cæsar's entry into the palace, she had received him as Queen, and hoped everything from his favour. Then her hated sister had come and, as so often happened, she was forgotten for Cleopatra's sake.

"This was too much, and with the eunuch

Ganymedes, her confidant, and—as I have already said—an able warrior, she left the palace and joined the dictator's foes.

"There were severe battles on land and sea; in the streets of the city, for the drinkable water excavated by the foe; and against the conflagration which destroyed part of the Bruchium and the library of the museum. Yet, half dead with thirst, barely escaped from drowning, threatened on all sides by fierce hatred, he stood firm, and remained victor also in the open field, after the young King had placed himself at the head of the Egyptians and collected an army.

"You know that the boy was drowned in the flight.

"In battle and mortal peril, amid blood and the clank of arms, Cæsar and Cleopatra spent half a year ere they were permitted to pluck the fruit of their common labour. The dictator now made her Queen of Egypt, and gave her, as co-regent, her youngest brother, a boy not half her own age. To Arsinoë he granted the life she had forfeited, but sent her to Italy.

"Peace followed the victory. Now, it is true, grave duties must have summoned the statesman back to Rome, but he tarried three full months longer.

"Whoever knows the life of the ambitious Julius, and is aware what this delay might have cost him, may well strike his brow with his hand,

and ask, 'Is it true and possible that he used this precious time to take a trip with the woman he loved up the Nile, to the island of Isis, which is so dear to the Queen, to the extreme southern frontier of the country?' Yet it was so, and I myself went in the second ship, and not only saw them together, but more than once shared their banquets and their conversation. It was giving and taking, forcing down and elevating, a succession of discords, not unpleasant to hear, because experience taught that they would finally terminate in the most beautiful harmony. It was a festal day for all the senses."

"I imagine the whole Nile journey," interrupted Barine, "to be like the fairy voyage, when the purple silk sails of Cleopatra's galley bore Antony along the Cydnus."

"No, no," replied Archibius, "she first learned from Antony the art of filling this earthly existence with fleeting pleasures. Cæsar demanded more. Her intellect offered him the highest enjoyment."

Here he hesitated.

"True, the skill with which, to please Antony, she daily offered him for years fresh charms for every sense, was not a matter of accident."

"And this," cried Barine, "this was undertaken by the woman who had recognized the chief good in peace of mind!"

"Ay," replied Archibius thoughtfully, "yet

this was the inevitable result. Pleasure had been the young girl's object in life. Ere passion awoke in her soul, peace of mind was the chief good she knew. When the hour arrived that this proved unattainable, the firmly rooted yearning for happiness still remained the purpose of her existence. My father would have been wiser to take her to the Stoa and impress it upon her that, if life must have a goal, it should be only to live in accordance with the sensibly arranged course of the world, and in harmony with one's own nature. He should have taught her to derive happiness from virtue. He should have stamped goodness upon the soul of the future Queen as the fundamental law of her being. He omitted to do this, because in his secluded life he had succeeded in finding the happiness which the master promises to his disciples. From Athens to Cyrene, from Epicurus to Aristippus, is but a short step, and Cleopatra took it when she forgot that the master was far from recognizing the chief good in the enjoyment of individual pleasure. The happiness of Epicurus was not inferior to that of Zeus, if he had only barley bread and water to appease his hunger and thirst.

"Yet she still considered herself a follower of Epicurus, and later, when Antony had gone to the Parthian war, and she was a long time alone, she once more began to strive for freedom from pain and peace of mind, but the state, her children, the

marriage of Antony—who had long been her lover —to Octavia, the yearning of her own heart, Anubis, magic, and the Egyptian teachings of the life after death, above all, the burning ambition, the unresting desire to be loved, where she herself loved, to be first among the foremost——"

Here he was interrupted by the messenger, who informed him that the ship was ready.

CHAPTER VII.

ARCHIBIUS had buried himself so deeply in the past that it was several minutes ere he could bring himself back to the present. When he did so, he hastily discussed with the two ladies the date of their departure.

It was hard for Berenike to leave her injured brother, and Barine longed to see Dion once more before the journey. Both were reluctant to quit Alexandria ere decisive news had arrived from the army and the fleet. So they requested a few days' delay; but Archibius cut them short, requiring them, with a resolution which transformed the amiable friend into a stern master, to be ready for the journey the next day at sunset. His Nile boat would await them at the Agathodæmon harbour on Lake Mareotis, and his travelling chariot would convey them thither, with as much luggage and as many female slaves as they desired to take with them. Then softening his tone, he briefly reminded the ladies of the great annoyances to which a longer stay would expose them, excused his rigour on the plea of haste, pressed the hands of

the mother and daughter, and retired without heeding Barine, who called after him, yet could desire nothing save to plead for a longer delay. The carriage bore him swiftly to the great harbour.

The waxing moon was mirrored like a silver column, now wavering and tremulous, now rent by the waves tossing under a strong southeast wind, and illumined the warm autumn night. The sea outside was evidently running high. This was apparent by the motion of the vessels lying at anchor in the angle which the shore in front of the superb Temple of Poseidon formed with the Choma. This was a tongue of land stretched like a finger into the sea, on whose point stood a little palace which Cleopatra, incited by a chance remark of Antony, had had built there to surprise him.

Another, of white marble, glimmered in the moonlight from the island of Antirrhodus; and farther still a blazing fire illumined the darkness. Its flames flared from the top of the famous lighthouse on the island of Pharos at the entrance of the harbour, and, swayed to and fro by the wind, steeped the horizon and the outer edge of the dark water in the harbour with moving masses of light which irradiated the gloomy distance, sometimes faintly, anon more brilliantly.

Spite of the late hour, the harbour was full of bustle; though the wind often blew the men's cloaks over their heads, and the women were obliged to gather their garments closely around

them. True, at this hour commerce had ceased; but many had gone to the port in search of news, or even to greet before others the first ship returning from the victorious fleet; for that Antony had defeated Octavianus in a great battle was deemed certain.

Guards were watching the harbour, and a band of Syrian horsemen had just passed from the barracks in the southern part of the Lochias to the Temple of Poseidon.

Here the galleys lay at anchor, not in the harbour of Eunostus, which was separated from the other by the broad, bridge-like dam of the Heptastadium, that united the city and the island of Pharos. Near it were the royal palaces and the arsenal, and any tidings must first reach this spot. The other harbour was devoted to commerce, but, in order to prevent the spread of false reports, newly arrived ships were forbidden to enter.

True, even at the great harbour, news could scarcely be expected, for a chain stretching from the end of the Pharos to a cliff directly opposite in the Alveus Steganus, closed the narrow opening. But it could be raised if a state galley arrived with an important message, and this was expected by the throng on the shore.

Doubtless many came from banquets, cookshops, taverns, or the nocturnal meeting-places of the sects that practised the magic arts, yet the weight of anxious expectation seemed to check

the joyous activity, and wherever Archibius glanced he beheld eager, troubled faces. The wind forced many to bow their heads, and, wherever they turned their eyes, flags and clouds of dust were fluttering in the air, increasing the confusion.

As the galley put off from the shore, and the flutes summoned the oarsmen to their toil, its owner felt so disheartened that he did not even venture to hope that he was going in quest of good tidings.

Long-vanished days had, as it were, been called from the grave, and many a scene from the past rose before him as he lay among the cushions on the poop, gazing at the sky, across which dark, swiftly sailing clouds sometimes veiled the stars and again revealed them.

"How much we can conceal by words without being guilty of falsehood!" he murmured, while recalling what he had told the women.

Ay, he had been Cleopatra's confidant in his early youth, but how he had loved her, how, even as a boy, he had been subject to her, body and soul! He had allowed her to see it, displayed, confessed it; and she had accepted it as her rightful due. She had repelled with angry pride his only attempt to clasp her, in his overflowing affection, in his arms; but to show his love for her is a crime for which the loftiest woman pardons the humblest suitor, and a few hours later Cleopatra had met him with the old affectionate familiarity.

Again he recalled the torments which he had endured when compelled to witness how completely she yielded to the passion which drew her to Antony. At that time the Roman had merely swept through her life like a swiftly passing meteor, but many things betrayed that she did not forget him; and while Archibius had seen without pain her love for the great Cæsar bud and grow, the torturing feeling of jealousy again stirred in his heart, though youth was past, when at Tarsus, on the river Cydnus, she renewed the bond which still united her to Antony.

Now his hair had grown grey, and though nothing had clouded his friendship for the Queen, though he had always been ready to serve her, this foolish feeling had not been banished, and again and again mastered his whole being. He by no means undervalued Antony's attractions; but he saw his foibles no less clearly. All in all, whenever he thought of this pair, he felt like the lover of art who entrusts the finest gem in his collection to a rich man who knows not how to prize its real value, and puts it in the wrong place.

Yet he wished the Roman the most brilliant victory; for his defeat would have been Cleopatra's also, and would she endure the consequences of such a disaster?

The galley was approaching the flickering circle of light at the foot of the Pharos, and Archibius was just producing the token which was to secure

the lifting of the chain, when his name echoed through the stillness of the night.

It was Dion hailing him from a boat tossing near the mouth of the harbour on the waves surging in from the turbulent sea. He had recognized Archibius's swift galley from the bust of Epicurus which was illumined by the light of the lantern in the prow. Cleopatra had had it placed upon the ship which, by her orders, had been built for her friend.

Dion now desired to join him, and was soon standing on the deck at his side. He had landed on the island of Pharos, and entered a sailors' tavern to learn what was passing. But no one could give him any definite information, for the wind was blowing from the land and allowed large vessels to approach the Egyptian coast only by the aid of oars. Shortly before the breeze had veered from south to southeast, and an experienced Rhodian would "never again lift cup of wine to his lips" if it did not blow from the north to-morrow or the day after. Then ships bearing news might reach Alexandria by the dozen—that is, the greybeard added with a defiant glance at the daintily clad city gentleman—if they were allowed to pass the Pharos or go through the Poseidon basin into the Eunostus. He had fancied that he saw sails on the horizon at sunset, but the swiftest galley became a hedgehog when the wind blew against its prow, and even checked the oars.

Others, too, had fancied that they had seen sails, and Dion would gladly have gone out to sea to investigate, but he was entirely alone in a frail hired boat, and this would not have been permitted to pass beyond the harbour. The expectation that every road would be open to Archibius had not deceived him, and the harbour chain was drawn aside for the Epicurus. With swelling sails, urged by the strong wind blowing from the south-east, its keel cut the rolling waves.

Soon a faint, tremulous light appeared in the north. It must be a ship; and though the helmsman in the tavern at Pharos, who looked as though he had not always steered peaceful trading-vessels, had spoken of some which did not let the ships they caught pass unscathed, the men on the well-equipped, stately Epicurus did not fear pirates, especially as morning was close at hand, and it had just shot by two clumsy men-of-war which had been sent out by the Regent.

The strong wind filled every sail, rowing would have been useless labour, and the light in front seemed to be coming nearer.

A wan glimmer was already beginning to brighten the distant east when the Epicurus approached the vessel with the light, but it seemed to wish to avoid the Alexandrian, and turned suddenly towards the northeast.

Archibius and Dion now discussed whether it would be worth while to pursue the fugitive. It

was a small ship, which, as the dark masses of clouds became bordered with golden edges, grew more distinct and appeared to be a Cilician pirate of the smallest size.

As to its crew, the tried sailors on the Epicurus, a much larger vessel, which lacked no means of defence, showed no signs of alarm, the helmsman especially, who had served in the fleet of Sextus Pompey, and had sprung upon the deck of many a pirate ship.

Archibius deemed it foolish to commence a conflict unnecessarily. But Dion was in the mood to brave every peril.

If life and death were at stake, so much the better!

He had informed his friend of Iras's fears.

The fleet must be in a critical situation, and if the little Cilician had had nothing to conceal she would not have shunned the Epicurus.

It was worth while to learn what had induced her to turn back just before reaching the harbour.

The warlike helmsman also desired to give chase, and Archibius yielded, for the uncertainty was becoming more and more unbearable. Dion's soul was deeply burdened too. He could not banish Barine's image; and since Archibius had told him that he had found her resolved to shut her house against guests, and how willingly she had accepted his invitation to the country, again and again he pondered over the question what should

prevent his marrying the quiet daughter of a distinguished artist, whom he loved?

Archibius had remarked that Barine would be glad to greet her most intimate friends—among whom he was included—in her quiet country home.

Dion did not doubt this, but he was equally sure that the greeting would bind him to her and rob him of his liberty, perhaps forever. But would the Alexandrian possess the lofty gift of freedom, if the Romans ruled his city as they governed Carthage or Corinth? If Cleopatra were defeated, and Egypt became a Roman province, a share in the business of the council, which was still addressed as "Macedonian men," and which was dear to Dion, could offer nothing but humiliation, and no longer afford satisfaction.

If a pirate's spear put an end to bondage under the Roman yoke and to this unworthy yearning and wavering, so much the better!

On this autumn morning, under this grey sky, from which sank a damp, light fog, with these hopes and fears in his heart, he beheld in both the present and future naught save shadows.

The Epicurus overtook and captured the fugitive. The slight resistance the vessel might have offered was relinquished when Archibius's helmsman shouted that the Epicurus did not belong to the royal navy, and had come in search of news.

The Cilician took in his oars; Archibius and Dion entered the vessel and questioned the commander.

He was an old, weather-beaten seaman, who would give no information until after he had learned what his pursuers really desired.

At first he protested that he had witnessed on the Peloponnesian coast a great victory gained by the Egyptian galleys over those commanded by Octavianus; but the queries of the two friends involved him in contradictions, and he then pretended to know nothing, and to have spoken of a victory merely to please the Alexandrian gentlemen.

Dion, accompanied by a few men from the crew of the Epicurus, searched the ship, and found in the little cabin a man bound and gagged, guarded by one of the pirates.

It was a sailor from the Pontus, who spoke only his native language. Nothing intelligible could be obtained from him; but there were important suggestions in a letter, found in a chest in the cabin, among clothing, jewels, and other stolen articles.

The letter—Dion could scarcely believe his own eyes—was addressed to his friend, the architect Gorgias. The pirate, being ignorant of writing, had not opened it, but Dion tore the wax from the cord without delay. Aristocrates, the Greek rhetorician, who had accompanied Antony

to the war, had written from Tænarum, in the south of the Peloponnesus, requesting the architect, in the general's name, to set the little palace at the end of the Choma in order, and surround it on the land side with a high wall.

No door would be necessary. Communication with the dwelling could be had by water. He must do his utmost to complete the work speedily.

The friends gazed at each other in astonishment, as they read this commission.

What could induce Antony to give so strange an order? How did it fall into the hands of the pirates?

This must be understood.

When Archibius, whose gentle nature, so well adapted to inspire confidence, quickly won friends, burst into passionate excitement, the unexpected transition rarely failed to produce its effect, especially as his tall, strong figure and marked features made a still more threatening impression.

Even the captain gazed at him with fear, when the Alexandrian threatened to recall all his promises of consideration and mercy if the pirate withheld even the smallest trifle connected with this letter. The man speedily perceived that it would be useless to make false statements; for the captive from Pontus, though unable to speak Greek, understood the language, and either confirmed every remark of the other with vehement gestures, or branded it in the same manner as false.

Thus it was discovered that the pirate craft, in company with a much larger vessel, owned by a companion, had lurked behind the promontory of Crete for a prize. They had neither seen nor heard aught concerning the two fleets, when a dainty galley, "the finest and fleetest that ever sailed in the sea"—it was probably the "Swallow," Antony's despatch-boat—had run into the snare. To capture her was an easy task. The pirates had divided their booty, but the lion's share of goods and men had fallen to the larger ship.

A pouch containing letters and money had been taken from a gentleman of aristocratic appearance—probably Antony's messenger—who had received a severe wound, died, and had been flung into the sea. The former had been used to light the fire, and only the one addressed to the architect remained.

The captured sailors had said that the fleet of Octavianus had defeated Cleopatra's, and the Queen had fled, but that the land forces were still untouched, and might yet decide the conflict in Antony's favour. The pirate protested that he did not know the position of the army—it might be at Tænarum, whence the captured ship came. It was a sin and a shame, but his own crew had set it on fire, and it sank before his eyes.

This report seemed to be true, yet the Acharnanian coast, where the battle was said to have been fought, was so far from the southern point of

the Peloponnesus, whence Antony's letter came, that it must have been written during the flight.

One thing appeared to be certain—the fleet had been vanquished and dispersed on the 2d or 3d of September.

Where would the Queen go now? What had become of the magnificent galleys which had accompanied her to the battle?

Even the contrary winds would not have detained them so long, for they were abundantly supplied with rowers.

Had Octavianus taken possession of them?

Were they burned or sunk?

But in that case how had Antony reached Tænarum?

The pirate could give no answer to these questions, which stirred both heart and brain. Why should he conceal what had reached his ears?

At last Archibius ordered the property stolen from Antony's ship, and the liberated sailor to be brought on board the Epicurus, but the pirate was obliged to swear not to remain in the waters between Crete and Alexandria. Then he was suffered to pursue his way unmolested.

This adventure had occupied many hours, and the return against the wind was slow; for, during the chase the Epicurus had been carried by the strong breeze far out to sea. Yet, when still several miles from the mouth of the harbour at the Pharos, it was evident that the Rhodian helms-

man in the island tavern had predicted truly; for the weather changed with unusual speed, and the wind now blew from the north. The sea fairly swarmed with ships, some belonging to the royal fleet, some to curious Alexandrians, who had sailed out to take a survey. Archibius and Dion had spent a sleepless night and day. The heavy air, pervaded by a fine mist, had grown cool. After refreshing themselves by a repast, they paced up and down the deck of the Epicurus.

Few words were exchanged, and they wrapped their cloaks closer around them. Both had quaffed large draughts of the fiery wine with which the Epicurus was well supplied, but it would not warm them. Even the fire, blazing brightly in the richly furnished cabin, could scarcely do so.

Archibius's thoughts lingered with his beloved Queen, and his vivid power of imagination conjured before his mind everything which could distress her. No possible chance, not even the most terrible, was forgotten, and when he saw her sinking in the ship, stretching her beautiful arms imploringly towards him, to whom she had so long turned in every perilous position, when he beheld her a captive in the presence of the hostile, cold-hearted Octavianus, the blood seemed to freeze in his veins. At last he dropped his felt mantle and, groaning aloud, struck his brow with his clenched hand. He had fancied her walking with gold chains on her slender wrists before the victor's

four-horse chariot, and heard the exulting shouts of the Roman populace.

That would have been the most terrible of all.

To pursue this train of thought was beyond the endurance of the faithful friend, and Dion turned in surprise as he heard him sob and saw the tears which bedewed his face.

His own heart was heavy enough, but he knew his companion's warm devotion to the Queen; so, passing his arm around his shoulder, he entreated him to maintain that peace of soul and mind which he had so often admired. In the most critical situations he had seen him stand high above them, as yonder man who fed the flames on the summit of the Pharos stood above the wild surges of the sea. If he would reflect over what had happened as dispassionately as usual, he could not fail to see that Antony must be free and in a position to guide his own future, since he directed the palace in the Choma to be put in order. He did not understand about the wall, but perhaps he was bringing home some distinguished captive whom he wished to debar from all communication with the city. It might prove that everything was far better than they feared, and they would yet smile at these grievous anxieties. His heart, too, was heavy, for he wished the Queen the best fortune, not only for her own sake, but because with her and her successful resistance to the greed of Rome was connected the liberty of Alexandria.

"My love and anxiety, like yours," he concluded, "have ever been given to her, the sovereign of this country. The world will be desolate, life will no longer be worth living, if the iron foot of Rome crushes our independence and freedom."

The words had sounded cordial and sincere, and Archibius followed Dion's counsel. Calm thought convinced him that nothing had yet happened which compelled belief in the worst result; and, as one who needs consolation often finds relief in comforting another, Archibius cheered his own heart by representing to his younger friend that, even if Octavianus were the victor and should deprive Egypt of her independence, he would scarcely venture to take from the citizens of Alexandria the free control of their own affairs. Then he explained to Dion that, as a young, resolute, independent man, he might render himself doubly useful if it were necessary to guard the endangered liberty of the city, and told him how many beautiful things life still held in store.

His voice expressed anxious tenderness for his young friend. No one had spoken thus to Dion since his father's death.

The Epicurus would soon reach the mouth of the harbour, and after landing he must again leave Archibius.

The decisive hour which often unites earnest men more firmly than many previous years had come to both. They had opened their hearts to

each other. Dion had withheld only the one thing which, at the first sight of the houses in the city, filled his soul with fresh uneasiness.

It was long since he had sought counsel from others. Many who had asked his, had left him with thanks, to do exactly the opposite of what he had advised, though it would have been to their advantage. More than once he, too, had done the same, but now a powerful impulse urged him to confide in Archibius. He knew Barine, and wished her the greatest happiness. Perhaps it would be wise to let another person, who was kindly disposed, consider what his own heart so eagerly demanded and prudence forbade.

Hastily forming his resolution, he again turned to his friend, saying:

"You have shown yourself a father to me. Imagine that I am indeed your son, and, as such wished to confess that a woman had become dear to my heart, and to ask whether you would be glad to greet her as a daughter."

Here Archibius interrupted him with the exclamation: "A ray of light amid all this gloom? Grasp what you have too long neglected as soon as possible! It befits a good citizen to marry. The Greek does not attain full manhood till he becomes husband and father. If I have remained unwedded, there was a special reason for it, and how often I have envied the cobbler whom I saw standing before his shop in the evening, holding

his child in his arms, or the pilot, to whom large and small hands were stretched in greeting when he returned home! When I enter my dwelling only my dogs rejoice. But you, whose beautiful palace stands empty, to whose proud family it is due that you should provide for its continuance——"

"That is just what brings me into a state of indecision, which is usually foreign to my nature," interrupted Dion. "You know me and my position in the world, and you have also known from her earliest childhood the woman to whom I allude."

"Iras?" asked his companion, hesitatingly. His sister, Charmian, had told him of the love felt by the Queen's younger waiting-woman.

But Dion eagerly denied this, adding: "I am speaking of Barine, the daughter of your dead friend Leonax. I love her, yet my pride is sensitive, and I know that it will extend to my future wife. The contemptuous glances which others might cast at her I should scorn, for I know her worth. Surely you remember my mother: she was a very different woman. Her house, her child, the slaves, her loom, were everything to her. She rigidly exacted from other women the chaste reserve which was a marked trait in her own character. Yet she was gentle, and loved me, her only son, beyond aught else. I think she would have opened her arms to Barine, had she believed that she was

necessary to my happiness. But would the young beauty, accustomed to gay intercourse with distinguished men, have been able to submit to her demands? When I consider that she cannot help taking into her married life the habit of being surrounded and courted; when I think that the imprudence of a woman accustomed to perfect freedom might set idle tongues in motion, and cast a shadow upon the radiant purity of my name; when I even—" and he raised his clenched right hand. But Archibius answered soothingly:

"That anxiety is groundless if Barine warmly and joyfully gives you her whole heart. It is a sunny, lovable, true woman's heart, and therefore capable of a great love. If she bestows it on you —and I believe she will—go and offer sacrifices in your gratitude; for the immortals desired your happiness when they guided your choice to her and not to Iras, my own sister's child. If you were really my son, I would now exclaim, 'You could not bring me a dearer daughter, if—I repeat it—if you are sure of her love.'"

Dion gazed into vacancy a short time, and then cried firmly:

"I am!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Epicurus anchored before the Temple of Poseidon. The crew had been ordered to keep silence, though they knew nothing, except that a letter from Antony, commanding the erection of a wall, had been found on board the pirate. This might be regarded as a good omen, for people do not think of building unless they anticipate a time of peace.

The light rain had ceased, but the wind blew more strongly from the north, and the air had grown cool. A dense throng still covered the quay from the southern end of the Heptastadium to the promontory of Lochias. The strongest pressure was between the peninsula of the Choma and the Sebasteum; for this afforded a view of the sea, and the first tidings must reach the residence of the Regent, which was connected with the palace.

A hundred contradictory rumours had been in circulation that morning; and when, at the third hour in the afternoon, the Epicurus arrived, it was surrounded by a dense multitude eager to hear what news the ship had brought from without.

Other vessels shared the same fate, but none could give reliable tidings.

Two swift galleys from the royal fleet reported meeting a Samian trireme, which had given news of a great victory gained by Antony on the land and Cleopatra on the sea, and, as men are most ready to believe what they desire, throngs of exulting men and women moved to and fro along the shore, strengthening by their confidence many a timorous spirit. Prudent people, who had regarded the long delay of the first ships of the fleet with anxiety, had opened their ears to the tales of evil, and looked forward to the future with uneasiness. But they avoided giving expression to their fears, for the overseer of an establishment for gold embroidery, who had ventured to warn the people against premature rejoicing, had limped home badly beaten, and two other pessimists who had been flung in the sea had just been dragged out dripping wet.

Nor could the multitude be blamed for this confidence; for at the Serapeum, the theatre of Dionysus, the lofty pylons of the Sebasteum, the main door of the museum, in front of the entrance of the palace in the Bruchium, and before the fortress-like palaces in the Lochias, triumphal arches had been erected, adorned with gods of victory and trophies hastily constructed of plaster, inscriptions of congratulations and thanks to the deities, garlands of foliage and flowers. The wreathing of the Egyptian pylons and obelisks, the principal

temple, and the favourite statues in the city had been commenced during the night. The last touches were now being given to the work.

Gorgias, like his friend Dion, had not closed his eyes since the night before; for he had had charge of all the decorations of the Bruchium, where one superb building adjoined another.

Sleep had also fled from the couches of the occupants of the Sebasteum, the royal palace where Iras lived during the absence of the Queen, and the prætorium, facing its southern front, which contained the official residence of the Regent.

When Archibius was conducted to the Queen's waiting-woman, her appearance fairly startled him. She had been his guest in Kanopus only the day before yesterday, and how great was the alteration within this brief time! Her oval face seemed to have lengthened, the features to have grown sharper; and this woman of seven-and-twenty years, who had hitherto retained all the charms of youth, appeared suddenly to have aged a decade. There was a feverish excitement in her manner, as, holding out her hand to her uncle, in greeting, she exclaimed hastily, "You, too, bring no good tidings?"

"Nor any evil ones," he answered quietly. "But, child, I do not like your appearance—the dark circles under your keen eyes. You have had news which rouses your anxiety?"

"Worse than that," she answered in a low tone.

"Well?"

"Read!" gasped Iras, her lips and nostrils quivering as she handed Archibius a small tablet.

With a gesture of haste very unusual in him, he snatched it from her hand and, as his eyes ran over the words traced upon it, every vestige of colour vanished from his cheeks and lips.

They were written by Cleopatra's own hand, and contained the following lines:

"The naval battle was lost—and by my fault. The land forces might still save us, but not under his command. He is with me, uninjured, but apparently exhausted; like a different being, bereft of courage, listless as if utterly crushed. I foresee the beginning of the end. As soon as this reaches you, arrange to have some unpretending litters ready for us every evening at sunset. Make the people believe that we have conquered until trustworthy intelligence arrives concerning the fate of Canidius and the army. When you kiss the children in my name, be very tender with them. Who knows how soon they may be orphaned? They already have an unhappy mother; may they be spared the memory of a cowardly one! Trust no one except those whom I left in authority, and Archibius, not even Cæsarion or Antyllus. Provide for having every one whose aid may be valuable to me within reach when I come. I cannot close with the familiar 'Rejoice'—the 'Fresh Courage'* placed

* "Rejoice" and "Fresh Courage" may be read on many tombs.

on many a tombstone seems more appropriate. You who did not envy me in my happiness will help me to bear misfortune. Epicurus, who believes that the gods merely watch the destiny of men inactively from their blissful heights, is right. Were it otherwise, how could the love and loyalty which cleave to the hapless, defeated woman, be repaid with anguish of heart and tears? Yet—continue to love her."

Archibius, pale and silent, let the tablet fall. It was long ere he gasped hoarsely: "I foresaw it; yet now that it is here—" His voice failed, and violent, tearless sobs shook his powerful frame.

Sinking on a couch he buried his face amid the cushions.

Iras gazed at the strong man and shook her head.

She, too, loved the Queen; the news had brought tears to her eyes also; but even while she wept, a host of plans coping with this disaster had darted through her restless brain. A few minutes after the arrival of the message of misfortune she had consulted with the members of Cleopatra's council, and adopted measures for sustaining the people's belief in the naval victory.

What was she, the delicate, by no means courageous girl, compared to this man of iron strength who, she was well aware, had braved the greatest perils in the service of the Queen? Yet there he lay with his face hidden in the pillows as if utterly overwhelmed.

Did a woman's soul rebound more quickly after being crushed beneath the burdens of the heaviest suffering, or was hers of a special character, and her slender body the casket of a hero's nature?

She had reason to believe so when she recalled how the Regent and the Keeper of the Seal had received the terrible news. They had rushed frantically up and down the vast hall as if desperate; but Mardion the eunuch had little manhood, and Zeno was a characterless old author who had won the Queen's esteem, and the high office which he occupied solely by the vivid power of imagination, that enabled him constantly to devise new exhibitions, amusements, and entertainments, and present them with magical splendour.

But Archibius, the brave, circumspect counsellor and helper?

His shoulders again quivered as if they had received a blow, and Iras suddenly remembered what she had long known, but never fully realized—that yonder grey-haired man loved Cleopatra, loved her as she herself loved Dion; and she wondered whether she would have been strong enough to maintain her composure if she had learned that a cruel fate threatened to rob him of life, liberty, and honour.

Hour after hour she had vainly awaited the young Alexandrian, yet he had witnessed her anxiety the day before. Had she offended him? Was

he detained by the spell of Didymus's beautiful granddaughter?

It seemed a great wrong that, amid the unspeakably terrible misfortune which had overtaken her mistress, she could not refrain from thinking continually of Dion. Even as his image filled her heart, Cleopatra's ruled her uncle's mind and soul, and she said to herself that it was not alone among women that love paid no heed to years, or whether the locks were brown or tinged with grey.

But Archibius now raised himself, left the couch, passed his hand across his brow, and in the deep, calm tones natural to his voice, began with a sorrowful smile: "A man stricken by an arrow leaves the fray to have his wound bandaged. The surgeon has now finished his task. I ought to have spared you this pitiable spectacle, child. But I am again ready for the battle. Cleopatra's account of Antony's condition renders a piece of news which we have just received somewhat more intelligible."

"We?" replied Iras. "Who was your companion?"

"Dion," answered Archibius; but when he was about to describe the incidents of the preceding night, she interrupted him with the question whether Barine had consented to leave the city. He assented with a curt "Yes," but Iras assumed the manner of having expected nothing different, and requested him to continue his story.

Archibius now related everything which they had experienced, and their discovery in the pirate ship. Dion was even now on the way to carry Antony's order to his friend Gorgias.

"Any slave might have attended to that matter equally well," Iras remarked in an irritated tone. "I should think he would have more reason to expect trustworthy tidings here. But that's the way with men!"

Here she hesitated but, meeting an inquiring glance from her uncle, she went on eagerly; "Nothing, I believe, binds them more firmly to one another than mutual pleasure. But that must now be over. They will seek other amusements, whether with Heliodora or Thais I care not. If the woman had only gone before! When she caught young Cæsarion——"

"Stay, child," her uncle interrupted reprovingly. "I know how much she would rejoice if Antyllus had never brought the boy to her house."

"Now—because the poor deluded lad's infatuation alarms her."

"No, from his first visit. Immature boys do not suit the distinguished men whom she receives."

"If the door is always kept open, thieves will enter the house."

"She received only old acquaintances, and the friends whom they presented. Her house was closed to all others. So there was no trouble with

thieves. But who in Alexandria could venture to refuse admittance to a son of the Queen?"

"There is a wide difference between quiet admittance and fanning a passion to madness. Wherever a fire is burning, there has certainly been a spark to kindle it. You men do not detect such women's work. A glance, a pressure of the hand, even the light touch of a garment, and the flame blazes, where such inflammable material lies ready."

"We lament the violence of the conflagration. You are not well disposed towards Barine."

"I care no more for her than this couch here cares for the statue of Mercury in the street!" exclaimed Iras, with repellent arrogance. "There could be no two things in the world more utterly alien than we. Between the woman whose door stands open, and me, there is nothing in common save our sex."

"And," replied Archibius reprovingly, "many a beautiful gift which the gods bestowed upon her as well as upon you. As for the open door, it was closed yesterday. The thieves of whom you spoke spoiled her pleasure in granting hospitality. Antyllus forced himself with noisy impetuosity into her house. This made her dread still more unprecedented conduct in the future. In a few hours she will be on the way to Irenia. I am glad for Cæsarion's sake, and still more for his mother's, whom we have wronged by forgetting so long for another."

"To think that we should be forced to do so!"

cried Iras excitedly—"now, at this hour, when every drop of blood, every thought of this poor brain should belong to the Queen! Yet it could not be avoided. Cleopatra is returning to us with a heart bleeding from a hundred wounds, and it is terrible to think that a new arrow must strike her as soon as she steps upon her native soil. You know how she loves the boy, who is the living image of the great man with whom she shared the highest joys of love. When she learns that he, the son of Cæsar, has given his young heart to the cast-off wife of a street orator, a woman whose home attracted men as ripe dates lure birds, it will be—I know—like rubbing salt into her fresh wounds. Alas! and the *one* sorrow will not be all. Antony, her husband, also found the way to Barine. He sought her more than once. You cannot know it as I do; but Charmian will tell you how sensitive she has become since the flower of her youthful charms—you don't perceive it—is losing one leaf after another. Jealousy will torture her, and —I know her well—perhaps no one will ever render the siren a greater service than I did when I compelled her to leave the city."

The eyes of Archibius's clever niece had glittered with such hostile feeling as she spoke that he thought with just anxiety of his dead friend's daughter. What did not yet threaten Barine as serious danger Iras had the power to transform into grave peril.

Dion had begged him to maintain strict secrecy; but even had he been permitted to speak, he would not have done so now. From his knowledge of Iras's character she might be expected, if she learned that some one had come between her and the friend of her youth, to shrink from no means of spoiling her game. He remembered the noble Macedonian maiden whom the Queen had begun to favour, and who was hunted to death by Iras's hostile intrigues. Few were more clever, and—if she once loved—more loyal and devoted, more yielding, pliant, and in happy hours more bewitching, yet even in childhood she had preferred a winding path to a straight one. It seemed as if her shrewdness scorned to attain the end desired by the simple method lying close at hand. How willingly his mother and his younger sister Charmian had cared for the slaves and nursed them when they were ill; nay, Charmian had gained in her Nubian maid Aniukis a friend who would have gone to death for her sake! Cleopatra, too, when a child, had found sincere delight in taking a bouquet to his parents' sick old housekeeper and sitting by her bedside to shorten the time for her with merry talk. She had gone to her unasked, while Iras had often been punished because she had made the lives of numerous slaves in her parents' household still harder by unreasonable harshness. This trait in her character had roused her uncle's anxiety and, in after-years, her treat-

ment of her inferiors had been such that he could not number her among the excellent of her sex. Therefore he was the more joyfully surprised by the loyal, unselfish love with which she devoted herself to the service of the Queen. Cleopatra had gratified Charmian's wish to have her niece for an assistant; and Iras, who had never been a loving daughter to her own faithful mother, had served her royal mistress with the utmost tenderness.

Archibius valued this loyalty highly, but he knew what awaited any one who became the object of her hatred, and the fear that it would involve Barine in urgent peril was added to his still greater anxiety for Cleopatra.

When about to depart, burdened by the sorrowful conviction that he was powerless against his niece's malevolent purpose, he was detained by the representation that every fresh piece of intelligence would first reach the Sebasteum and her. Some question might easily arise which his calm, prudent mind could decide far better than hers, whose troubled condition resembled a shallow pool disturbed by stones flung into the waves.

The apartments of his sister Charmian, which were connected with his by a corridor, were empty, and Iras begged him to remain there a short time. The anxiety and dread that oppressed her heart would kill her. To know that he was near would be the greatest comfort.

When Archibius hesitated because he deemed it

his duty to urge Cæsarion, over whom he possessed some influence, to give up his foolish wishes for his mother's sake, Iras assured him that he would not find the youth. He had gone hunting with Antyllus and some other friends. She had approved the plan, because it removed him from the city and Barine's dangerous house.

"As the Queen does not wish him to know the terrible news yet," she concluded, "his presence would only have caused us embarrassment. So stay, and when it grows dark go with us to the Lochias. I think it will please the sorrowing woman, when she lands, to see your familiar face, which will remind her of happier days. Do me the favour to stay." She held out both hands beseechingly as she spoke, and Archibius consented.

A repast was served, and he shared it with his niece; but Iras did not touch the carefully chosen viands, and Archibius barely tasted them. Then, without waiting for dessert, he rose to go to his sister's apartments. But Iras urged him to rest on the divan in the adjoining room, and he yielded. Yet, spite of the softness of the pillows and his great need of sleep, he could not find it; anxiety kept him awake, and through the curtain which divided the room in which Iras remained from the one he occupied he sometimes heard her light footsteps pacing restlessly to and fro, sometimes the coming and going of messengers in quest of news.

All his former life passed before his mind. Cleopatra had been his sun, and now black clouds were rising which would dim its light, perchance forever. He, the disciple of Epicurus, who had not followed the doctrines of other masters until later in life, held the same view of the gods as his first master. To him also they had seemed immortal beings sufficient unto themselves, dwelling free from anxiety in blissful peace, to whom mortals must look upward on account of their supreme grandeur, but who neither troubled themselves about the guidance of the world, which was fixed by eternal laws, nor the fate of individuals. Had he been convinced of the contrary, he would have sacrificed everything he possessed in order, by lavish offerings, to propitiate the immortals in behalf of her to whom he had devoted his life and every faculty of his being.

Like Iras, he, too, could find no rest upon his couch, and when she heard his step she called to him and asked why he did not recover the sleep which he had lost. No one knew the demands the next night might make upon him.

"You will find me awake," he answered quietly.

Then he went to the window which, above the pylons that rose before the main front of the Sebasteum, afforded a view of the Bruchium and the sea. The harbour was now swarming with vessels of every size, garlanded with flowers and adorned

with gay flags and streamers. The report of the successful issue of the first naval battle was believed, and many desired to greet the victorious fleet and hail their sovereign as she entered the harbour.

Many people, equipages, and litters had also gathered on the shore, between the lofty pylons and the huge door of the Sebasteum. They were representatives of the aristocracy of the city; for the majority were attended by richly attired slaves. Many wore costly garlands, and numerous chariots and litters were adorned with gold or silver ornaments, gems, and glittering paste. The stir and movement in front of the palace were ceaseless, and Iras, who was now standing beside her uncle, waved her hand towards it, saying: "The wind of rumour! Yesterday only one or two came; to-day every one who belongs to the 'Inimitable Livers' flocks hither in person to get news. The victory was proclaimed in the market-place, at the theatre, the gymnasium, and the camp. Every one who wears garlands or weapons heard of a battle won. Yesterday, among all the thousands, there was scarcely a single doubter; but to-day—how does it happen? Even among those who as 'Inimitables' have shared all the pleasures, entertainments, and festivities of our noble pair, faith wavers; for if they were firmly convinced of the brilliant victory which was announced loudly enough, they would not come themselves to watch,

to spy, to listen. Just look down! There is the litter of Diogenes—yonder that of Ammonius. The chariot beyond belongs to Melampous. The slaves in the red bombyx garments serve Hermias. They all belong to the society of 'Inimitables,' and shared our banquets. That very Apollonius who, for the last half hour, has been trying to question the palace servants, day before yesterday ordered fifty oxen to be slaughtered to Ares, Nike, and the great Isis, as the Queen's goddess, and when I met him in the temple he exclaimed that this was the greatest piece of extravagance he had ever committed; for even without the cattle Cleopatra and Antony would be sure of victory. But now the wind of rumour has swept away his beautiful confidence also. They are not permitted to see me. The doorkeepers say that I am in the country. The necessity of showing every one a face radiant with the joy of victory would kill me. There comes Apollonius. How his fat face beams! He believes in the victory, and after sunset none of yonder throng will appear here; he is already giving orders to his slaves. He will invite all his friends to a banquet, and won't spare his costly wines. Capital! At least no one from that company can disturb us. Dion is his cousin, and will be present also. We shall see what these pleasure-lovers will do when they are forced to confront the terrible reality."

"I think," replied Archibius, "they will afford

the world a remarkable spectacle; friends won in prosperity who remain constant in adversity."

"Do you?" asked Iras, with sparkling eyes. "If that proves true, how I would praise and value men—the majority of whom without their wealth would be poorer than beggars. But look at yonder figure in the white robe beside the left obelisk —is it not Dion? The crowd is bearing him away —I think it was he."

But she had been deceived; the man whom she fancied she had seen, because her heart so ardently yearned for him, was not near the Sebasteum, and his thoughts were still farther away.

At first he had intended to give the architect the letter which was addressed to him. He would be sure to find him at the triumphal arch which was being erected on the shore of the Bruchium. But on reaching the former place he learned that Gorgias had gone to remove the statues of Cleopatra and Antony from the house of Didymus, and erect them in front of the Theatre of Dionysus. The Regent, Mardion, had ordered it. Gorgias was already superintending the erection of the foundation.

The huge hewn stones which he required for this purpose had been taken from the Temple of Nemesis, which he was supervising. Whatever number of government slaves he needed were at his disposal, so Gorgias's foreman reported, proudly adding that before the sun went down,

the architect would have shown the Alexandrians the marvel of removing the twin statues from one place to another in a single day, and yet establishing them as firmly as the Colossus which had been in Thebes a thousand years.

Dion found the piece of sculpture in front of Didymus's garden, ready for removal, but the slaves who had placed before the platform the rollers on which it was to be moved had already been kept waiting a long time by the architect.

This was his third visit to the old philosopher's house. First, he had been obliged to inform him and his family that their property was no longer in danger; then he had come to tell them at what hour he would remove the statues, which still attracted many curious spectators; and, finally, he had again appeared, to announce that they were to be taken away at once. His foreman or a slave could probably have done this, but Helena—Didymus's granddaughter, Barine's sister—drew him again and again to the old man's home. He would gladly have come still more frequently, for at every meeting he had discovered fresh charms in the beautiful, quiet, thoughtful maiden, who cared so tenderly for her aged grandparents. He believed that he loved her, and she seemed glad to welcome him. But this did not entitle him to seek her hand, though his large, empty house so greatly needed a mistress. His heart had glowed with love for too many. He wished first to test whether this new fancy would

prove more lasting. If he succeeded in remaining faithful even a few days, he would, as it were, reward himself for it, and appear before Didymus as a suitor.

He excused his frequent visits to himself on the pretext of the necessity of becoming acquainted with his future wife, and Helena made the task easier for him. The usual reserve of her manner lessened more and more; nay, the great confidence with which he at first inspired her was increased by his active assistance. When he entered just now, she had even held out her hand to him, and inquired about the progress of his work.

He was overwhelmed with business, but so great was his pleasure in talking with her that he lingered longer than he would have deemed right under any other circumstances, and regarded it as an unpleasant interruption when Barine—for whom his heart had throbbed so warmly only yesterday—entered the tablinum.

The young beauty was by no means content with a brief greeting; but drew Helena entirely away from him. Never had he seen her embrace and kiss her sister so passionately as while hurriedly telling her that she had come to bid farewell to the loved ones in her grandparents' house.

Berenike had arrived with her, but went first to the old couple.

While Barine was telling Helena and Gorgias, also, why all this plan had been formed so hastily,

Gorgias was silently comparing the two sisters. He found it natural that he had once believed that he loved Barine; but she would not have been a fitting mistress of his house. Life at her side would have been a chain of jealous emotions and anxieties, and her stimulating remarks and searching questions, which demanded absolute attention, would not have permitted him, after his return home, wearied by arduous toil, to find the rest for which he longed. His eye wandered from her to her sister, as if testing the space between two newly erected pillars; and Barine, who had noticed his strange manner, suddenly laughed merrily, and asked whether they might know what building was occupying his thoughts, while a good friend was telling him that the pleasant hours in her house were over.

Gorgias started, and the apology he stammered showed so plainly how inattentively he had listened, that Barine would have had good reason to feel offended. But one glance at her sister and another at him enabled her speedily to guess the truth. She was pleased; for she esteemed Gorgias, and had secretly feared that she might be forced to grieve him by a refusal, but he seemed as if created for her sister. Her arrival had probably interrupted them so, turning to Helena, she exclaimed: "I must see my mother and our grandparents. Meanwhile entertain our friend here. We know each other well. He is one of

the few men who can be trusted. That is my honest opinion, Gorgias, and I say it to you also, Helena."

With these words she nodded to both, and Gorgias was again alone with the maiden whom he loved.

It was difficult to begin the conversation anew, and when, spite of many efforts, it would not flow freely, the shout of the overseer, which reached his ear through the opening of the roof, urging the men to work, was like a deliverance. Promising to return again soon, as eagerly as if he had been requested to do so, he took his leave and opened the door leading into the adjoining room. But on the threshold he started back, and Helena, who had followed him, did the same, for there stood his friend Dion, and Barine's beautiful head lay on his breast, while his hand rested as if in benediction on her fair hair. And—no, Gorgias was not mistaken—the slender frame of the lovely woman, whose exuberant vivacity had so often borne him and others away with it, trembled as if shaken by deep and painful emotion.

When Dion perceived his friend, and Barine raised her head, turning her face towards him, it was indeed wet with tears, but their source could not be sorrow; for her blue eyes were sparkling with a happy light.

Yet Gorgias found something in her features which he was unable to express in words—the

reflection of the ardent gratitude that had taken possession of her soul and filled it absolutely.

While seeking the architect, Dion had met Barine, who was on her way to her grandparents, and what he had dreaded the day before happened.

The first glance from her eyes which met his forced the decisive question from his lips.

In brief, earnest words he confessed his love for her, and his desire to make her his own, as the pride and ornament of his house.

Then, in the intensity of her bliss, her eyes overflowed and, under the spell of a great miracle wrought in her behalf, she found no words to answer; but Dion had approached, clasped her right hand in both of his, and frankly acknowledged how, with the image of his strict mother before his eyes, he had wavered and hesitated until love had overmastered him. Now, full of the warmest confidence, he asked whether she would consent to rule as mistress of his home, the honour and ornament of his ancient name? He knew that her heart was his, but he must hear one thing more from her lips——

Here she had interrupted him with the cry, "This one thing—that your wife, in joy and in sorrow, will live for you and you alone? The whole world can vanish for her, now that you have raised her to your side and she is yours."

After this assurance, which sounded like an oath, Dion felt as if a heavy burden had fallen

from his heart, and clasping her in his arms with passionate tenderness, he repeated, " In joy and in sorrow ! "

Thus Gorgias and Helena had surprised them, and the architect felt for the first time that there is no distinction between our own happiness and that of those whom we love.

His friend Helena seemed to have the same feeling, when she saw what this day had given her sister; and the philosopher's house, so lately shadowed by anxiety, and many a fear, would soon ring with voices uttering joyous congratulations.

The architect no longer felt that he had a place in this circle, which was now pervaded by a great common joy, and after Dion made a brief explanation, Gorgias's voice was soon heard outside loudly issuing orders to the workmen.

CHAPTER IX.

GORGIAS went to his work without delay. When the twin statues were only waiting to be erected in front of the Theatre of Dionysus, Dion sought him. Some impulse urged him to talk to his old friend before leaving the city with his betrothed bride. Since they parted the latter had accomplished the impossible; for the building of the wall on the Choma, ordered by Antony, was commenced, the restoration of the little palace at the point, and many other things connected with the decoration of the triumphal arches, were arranged. His able and alert foreman found it difficult to follow him as he dictated order after order in his writing-tablet.

The conversation with his friend was not a long one, for Dion had promised Barine and her mother to accompany them to the country. Notwithstanding the betrothal, they were to start that very day; for Cæsarion had called upon Barine twice that morning. She had not received him, but the unfortunate youth's conduct induced her to hasten the preparations for her departure.

To avoid attracting attention, they were to use Archibius's large travelling chariot and Nile boat, although Dion's were no less comfortable.

The marriage was to take place in the "abode of peace." The young Alexandrian's own ship, which was to convey the newly wedded pair to Alexandria, bore the name of Peitho, the goddess of persuasion, for Dion liked to be reminded of his oratorical powers in the council. Henceforward it would be called the *Barine*, and was to receive many an embellishment.

Dion confided to his friend what he had learned in relation to the fate of the Queen and the fleet, and, notwithstanding the urgency of the claims upon Gorgias's time, he lingered to discuss the future destiny of the city and her threatened liberty; for these things lay nearest to his heart.

"Fortunately," cried Dion, "I followed my inclination; now it seems to me that duty commands every true man to make his own house a nursery for the cultivation of the sentiments which he inherited from his forefathers and which must not die, so long as there are Macedonian citizens in Alexandria. We must submit if the superior might of Rome renders Egypt a province of the republic, but we can preserve to our city and her council the lion's share of their freedom. Whatever may be the development of affairs, we are and shall remain the source whence Rome draws the largest share of the knowledge which enriches her brain."

"And the art which adorns her rude life," replied Gorgias. "If she is free to crush us without pity, she will fare, I think, like the maiden who raises her foot to trample on a beautiful, rare flower, and then withdraws it because it would be a crime to destroy so exquisite a work of the Creator."

"And what does the flower owe to your maiden," cried Dion, "or our city to Rome? Let us meet her claims with dignified resolution, then I think we shall not have the worst evils to fear."

"Let us hope so. But, my friend, keep your eyes open for other than Roman foes. Now that it will become known that you do not love her, beware of Iras. There is something about her which reminds me of the jackal. Jealousy!—I believe she would be capable of the worst——"

"Yet," Dion interrupted, "Charmian will soften whatever injury Iras plans to do me, and, though I cannot rely much upon my uncle, Archibius is above both and favours us and our marriage."

Gorgias uttered a sigh of relief, and exclaimed, "Then on to happiness!"

"And you must also begin to provide for yours," replied Dion warmly. "Forbid your heart to continue this wandering, nomad life. The tent which the wind blows down is not fit for the architect's permanent residence. Build yourself a fine house, which will defy storms, as you built my

palace. I shall not grudge it, and have already said, the times demand it."

"I will remember the advice," replied Gorgias. "But six eyes are again bent upon me for direction. There are so many important things to be done while we waste the hours in building triumphal arches for the defeated—trophies for an overthrow. But your uncle has just issued orders to complete the work in the most magnificent style. The ways of destiny and the great are dark; may the brightest sunshine illumine yours! A prosperous journey! We shall hear, of course, when you celebrate the wedding, and if I can I shall join you in the Hymenæus. Lucky fellow that you are! Now I'm summoned from over yonder! May Castor and Pollux, and all the gods favourable to travel, Aphrodite, and all the Loves attend your trip to Irenia, and protect you in the realm of Eros and Hymen!"

With these words the warm-hearted man clasped his friend to his breast for the first time. Dion cordially responded, and at last shook his hard right hand with the exclamation:

"Farewell, then, till we meet in Irenia on the wedding day, you dear, faithful fellow."

Then he entered the chariot which stood waiting, and Gorgias gazed after him thoughtfully.

The hyacinthine purple cloak which Dion wore that day had not vanished from his sight when a loud crashing, rattling, and roaring arose behind

him. A hastily erected scaffold, which was to support the pulleys for raising the statues, had collapsed. The damage could be easily repaired, but the accident aroused a troubled feeling in the architect's mind. He was a child of his time, a period when duty commanded the prudent man to heed omens. Experience also taught him that when such a thing happened in his work something unpleasant was apt to occur within the circle of his friends. The veil of the future concealed what might be in store for the beloved couple; but he resolved to keep his eyes open on Dion's behalf and to request Archibius to do the same.

The pressure of work, however, soon silenced the sense of uneasiness. The damage was speedily repaired, and later Gorgias, sometimes with one, sometimes with another tablet or roll of MS. in his hand, issued the most varied orders.

Gradually the light of this dismal day faded.

Ere the night, which threatened to bring rain and storm, closed in, he again rode on his mule to the Bruchium to overlook the progress of the work in the various buildings and give additional directions, for the labour was to be continued during the night.

The north wind was now blowing so violently from the sea that it was difficult to keep the torches and lamps lighted. The gale drove the drops of rain into his face, and a glance northward showed him masses of black clouds beyond

the harbour and the lighthouse. This indicated a bad night, and again the boding sense of coming misfortune stole over him. Yet he set to work swiftly and prudently, helping with his own hands when occasion required.

Night closed in. Not a star was visible in the sky, and the air, chilled by the north wind, grew so cold that Gorgias at last permitted his body slave to wrap his cloak around him. While drawing the hood over his head, he gazed at a procession of litters and men moving towards Lochias.

Perhaps the Queen's children were returning home from some expedition. But probably they were rather private citizens on their way to some festival celebrating the victory; for every one now believed in a great battle and a successful issue of the war. This was proved by the shouts and cheers of the people, who, spite of the storm, were still moving to and fro near the harbour.

The last of the torch-bearers had just passed Gorgias, and he had told himself that a train of litters belonging to the royal family would not move through the darkness so faintly lighted, when a single man, bearing in his hand a lantern, whose flickering rays shone on his wrinkled face, approached rapidly from the opposite direction. It was old Phryx, Didymus's house slave, with whom the architect had become acquainted, while the aged scholar was composing the inscription for the Odeum which Gorgias had erected. The aged

servant had brought him many alterations of his master's first sketch, and Gorgias had reminded him of it the previous day.

The workmen by whom the statues had been raised to the pedestal, amid the bright glare of torches, to the accompaniment of a regular chant, had just dropped the ropes, windlasses, and levers, when the architect recognized the slave.

What did the old man want at so late an hour on this dark night? The fall of the scaffold again returned to his mind.

Was the slave seeking for a member of the family? Did Helena need assistance? He stopped the gray-haired man, who answered his question with a heavy sigh, followed by the maxim, "Misfortunes come in pairs, like oxen." Then he continued: "Yesterday there was great anxiety. To-day, when there was so much rejoicing on account of Barine, I thought directly, 'Sorrow follows joy, and the second misfortune won't be spared us.' And so it proved."

Gorgias anxiously begged him to relate what had happened, and the old man, drawing nearer, whispered that the pupil and assistant of Didymus —young Philotas of Amphissa, a student, and, moreover, a courteous young man of excellent family—had gone to a banquet to which Antyllus, the son of Antony, had invited several of his classmates. This had already happened several times, and he, Phryx, had warned him, for, when the lowly

associate with the lofty, the lowly rarely escape kicks and blows. The young fellow, who usually had behaved no worse than the other Ephebi, had always returned from such festivities with a flushed face and unsteady steps, but to-night he had not even reached his room in the upper story. He had darted into the house as though pursued by the watch, and, while trying to rush up the stairs—it was really only a ladder—he had made a misstep and fell. He, Phryx, did not believe that he was hurt, for none of his limbs ached, even when they were pulled and stretched, and Dionysus kindly protected drunkards; but some demon must have taken possession of him, for he howled and groaned continually, and would answer no questions. True, he was aware, from the festivals of Dionysus, that the young man was one of those who, when intoxicated, weep and lament; but this time something unusual must have occurred, for in the first place his handsome face was coloured black and looked hideous, since his tears had washed away the soot in many places, and then he talked nothing but a confused jargon. It was a pity.

When an attempt was made, with the help of the garden slave, to carry him to his room, he dealt blows and kicks like a lunatic. Didymus now also believed that he was possessed by demons, as often happens to those who, in falling, strike their heads against the ground, and thus wake the demons in the earth. Well, yes, they might be demons, but

only those of wine. The student was just "crazy drunk," as people say. But the old gentleman was very fond of his pupil, and had ordered him, Phryx, to go to Olympus, who, ever since he could remember, had been the family physician.

"The Queen's leech?" asked Gorgias, disapprovingly, and when the slave assented, the architect exclaimed in a positive tone: "It is not right to force the old man out of doors in such a north wind. Age is not specially considerate to age. Now that the statues stand yonder, I can leave my post for half an hour and will go with you. I don't think a leech is needed to drive out *these* demons."

"True, my lord, true!" cried the slave, "but Olympus is our friend. He visits few patients, but he will come to our house in any weather. He has litters, chariots, and splendid mules. The Queen gives him whatever is best and most comfortable. He is skilful, and perhaps can render speedy help. People must use what they have."

"Only where it is necessary," replied the architect. "There are my two mules; follow me on the second. If I don't drive out the demons, you will have plenty of time to trot after Olympus."

This proposal pleased the old slave, and a short time after Gorgias entered the venerable philosopher's tablinum.

Helena welcomed him like an intimate friend. Whenever he appeared she thought the peril was

half over. Didymus, too, greeted him warmly, and conducted him to the little room where the youth possessed by demons lay on a divan.

He was still groaning and whimpering. Tears were streaming down his cheeks, and, whenever any member of the household approached, he pushed him away.

When Gorgias held his hands and sternly ordered him to confess what wrong he had done, he sobbed out that he was the most ungrateful wretch on earth. His baseness would ruin his kind parents, himself, and all his friends.

Then he accused himself of having caused the destruction of Didymus's granddaughter. He would not have gone to Antyllus again had not his recent generosity bound him to him, but now he must atone—ay, atone. Then, as if completely crushed, he continued to mumble the word, "atone!" and for a time nothing more could be won from him.

Didymus, however, had the key to the last sentence. A few weeks before, Philotas and several other pupils of the rhetorician whose lectures in the museum he attended had been invited to breakfast with Antyllus. When the young student loudly admired the beautiful gold and silver beakers in which the wine was served, the reckless host cried: "They are yours; take them with you." When the guests departed the cup-bearer asked Philotas, who had been far from taking the gift

seriously, to receive his property. Antyllus had intended to bestow the goblets; but he advised the youth to let him pay their value in money, for among them were several ancient pieces of most artistic workmanship, which Antony, the extravagant young fellow's father, might perhaps be unwilling to lose.

Thereupon several rolls of gold *solidi* were paid to the astonished student—and they had been of little real benefit, since they had made it possible for him to keep pace with his wealthy and aristocratic classmates and share many of their extravagances. Yet he had not ceased to fulfil his duty to Didymus.

Though he sometimes turned night into day, he gave no serious cause for reproof. Small youthful errors were willingly pardoned; for he was a good-looking, merry young fellow, who knew how to make himself agreeable to the entire household, even to the women.

What had befallen the poor youth that day? Didymus was filled with compassion for him, and, though he gladly welcomed Gorgias, he gave him to understand that the leech's absence vexed him.

But, during a long bachelor career in Alexandria, a city ever gracious to the gifts of Bacchus, Gorgias had become familiar with attacks like those of Philotas and their treatment, and after several jars of water had been brought and he had

been left alone a short time with the sufferer, the philosopher secretly rejoiced that he had not summoned the grey-haired leech into the stormy night. for Gorgias led forth his pupil with dripping hair, it is true, but in a state of rapid convalescence.

The youth's handsome face was freed from soot, but his eyes were bent in confusion on the ground, and he sometimes pressed his hand upon his aching brow. It needed all the old philosopher's skill in persuasion to induce him to speak, and Philotas, before he began, begged Helena to leave the room.

He intended to adhere strictly to the truth, though he feared that the reckless deed into which he had suffered himself to be drawn might have a fatal effect upon his future life.

Besides, he hoped to obtain wise counsel from the architect, to whom he owed his speedy recovery, and whose grave, kindly manner inspired him with confidence; and, moreover, he was so greatly indebted to Didymus that duty required him to make a frank confession—yet he dared not acknowledge one of the principal motives of his foolish act.

The plot into which he had been led was directed against Barine, whom he had long imagined he loved with all the fervour of his twenty years. But, just before he went to the fatal banquet, he had heard that the young beauty was betrothed to Dion. This had wounded him deeply; for in many

a quiet hour it had seemed possible to win her for himself and lead her as his wife to his home in Amphissa. He was very little younger than she, and if his parents once saw her, they could not fail to approve his choice. And the people in Amphissa! They would have gazed at Barine as if she were a goddess.

And now this fine gentleman had come to crush his fairest hopes. No word of love had ever been exchanged between him and Barine, but how kindly she had always looked at him, how willingly she had accepted trivial services! Now she was lost.

At first this had merely saddened him, but after he had drunk the wine, and Antyllus, Antony's son, in the presence of the revellers, over whom Cæsarion presided as "symposiarch" * had accused Barine of capturing hearts by magic spells, he had arrived at the conviction that he, too, had been shamefully allured and betrayed.

He had served for a toy, he said to himself, unless she had really loved him and merely preferred Dion on account of his wealth. In any case, he felt justified in cherishing resentment against Barine, and with the number of goblets which he drained his jealous rage increased.

When urged to join in the escapade which now burdened his conscience he consented with a burning brain in order to punish her for the wrong

* Director of a banquet.

which, in his heated imagination, she had done him.

All this he withheld from the older men and merely briefly described the splendid banquet which Cæsarion, pallid and listless as ever, had directed, and Antyllus especially had enlivened with the most reckless mirth.

The "King of kings" and Antony's son had escaped from their tutors on the pretext of a hunting excursion, and the chief huntsman had not grudged them the pleasure—only they were obliged to promise him that they would be ready to set out for the desert early the next morning.

When, after the banquet, the mixing-vessels were brought out and the beakers were filled more rapidly, Antyllus whispered several times to Cæsarion and then turned the conversation upon Barine, the fairest of the fair, destined by the immortals for the greatest and highest of mankind. This was the "King of kings," Cæsarion, and he also claimed the favour of the gods for himself. But everybody knew that Aphrodite deemed herself greater than the highest of kings, and therefore Barine ventured to close her doors upon their august symposiarch in a manner which could not fail to be unendurable, not only to him but to all the youth of Alexandria. Whoever boasted of being one of the Ephebi might well clench his fist with indignation, when he heard that the insolent beauty kept young men at a distance because she con-

sidered only the older ones worthy of her notice. This must not be! The Ephebi of Alexandria must make her feel the power of youth. This was the more urgently demanded, because Cæsarion would thereby be led to the goal of his wishes.

Barine was going into the country that very evening. Insulted Eros himself was smoothing their way. He commanded them to attack the arrogant fair one's carriage and lead her to him who sought her in the name of youth, in order to show her that the hearts of the Ephebi, whom she disdainfully rejected, glowed more ardently than those of the older men on whom she bestowed her favours.

Here Gorgias interrupted the speaker with a loud cry of indignation, but old Didymus's eyes seemed to be fairly starting from their sockets as he hoarsely shouted an impatient—

"Go on!"

And Philotas, now completely sobered, described with increasing animation the wonderful change that had taken place in the quiet Cæsarion, as if some magic spell had been at work; for scarcely had the revellers greeted Antyllus's words with shouts of joy, declaring themselves ready to avenge insulted youth upon Barine, than the "King of kings" suddenly sprang from the cushions on which he had listlessly reclined, and with flashing eyes shouted that whoever called himself his friend must aid him in the attack.

Here he was urged to still greater haste by another impatient "Go on!" from his master, and hurriedly continued his story, describing how they had blackened their faces and armed themselves with Antyllus's swords and lances. As the sun was setting they went in a covered boat through the Agathodæmon Canal to Lake Mareotis. Everything must have been arranged in advance; for they landed precisely at the right hour.

As, during the trip, they had kept up their courage by swallowing the most fiery wine, Philotas had staggered on shore with difficulty and then been dragged forward by the others. After this he knew nothing more, except that he had rushed with the rest upon a large *harmamaxa*,* and in so doing fell. When he rose from the earth all was over.

As if in a dream he saw Scythians and other guardians of the peace seize Antyllus, while Cæsarion was struggling on the ground with another man. If he was not mistaken it was Dion, Barine's betrothed husband.

These communications were interrupted by many exclamations of impatience and wrath; but now Didymus, fairly frantic with alarm, cried:

"And the child—Barine?"

But when Philotas's sole reply to this question was a silent shake of the head, indignation con-

* A closed Asiatic travelling-carriage with four wheels.

quered the old philosopher, and clutching his pupil's *chiton* with both hands, he shook him violently, exclaiming furiously:

"You don't know, scoundrel? Instead of defending her who should be dear to you as a child of this household, you joined the rascally scorners of morality and law as the accomplice of this waylayer in purple!"

Here the architect soothed the enraged old man with expostulations, and the assertion that everything must now yield to the necessity of searching for Barine and Dion. He did not know which way to turn, in the amount of labour pressing upon him, but he would have a hasty talk with the foreman and then try to find his friend.

"And I," cried the old man, "must go at once to the unfortunate child.—My cloak, Phryx, my sandals!"

In spite of Gorgias's counsel to remember his age and the inclement weather, he cried angrily:

"I am going, I say! If the tempest hurls me to the earth, and the bolts of Zeus strike me, so be it. One misfortune more or less matters little in a life which has been a chain of heavy blows of Fate. I buried three sons in the prime of manhood, and two have been slain in battle. Barine, the joy of my heart, I myself, fool that I was, bound to the scoundrel who blasted her joyous existence; and now that I believed she would be protected from trouble and misconstruction by the side of a

worthy husband, these infamous rascals, whose birth protects them from vengeance, have wounded, perhaps killed her betrothed lover. They trample in the dust her fair name and my white hair!—Phryx, my hat and staff."

The storm had long been raging around the house, which stood close by the sea, and the sail-cloth awning which was stretched over the impluvium noisily rattled the metal rings that confined it. Now so violent a gust swept from room to room that two of the flames in the three-branched lamp went out. The door of the house had been opened, and drenched with rain, a hood drawn over his black head, Barine's Nubian doorkeeper crossed the threshold.

He presented a pitiable spectacle and at first could find no answer to the greetings and questions of the men, who had been joined by Helena, her grandmother leaning on her arm; his rapid walk against the fury of the storm had fairly taken away his breath.

He had little, however, to tell. Barine merely sent a message to her relatives that, no matter what tales rumour might bring, she and her mother were unhurt. Dion had received a wound in the shoulder, but it was not serious. Her grandparents need have no anxiety; the attack had completely failed.

Doris, who was deaf, had listened vainly, holding her hand to her ear, to catch this report; and

Didymus now told his granddaughter as much as he deemed it advisable for her to know, that she might communicate it to her grandmother, who understood the movements of her lips.

The old man was rejoiced to learn that his granddaughter had escaped so great a peril uninjured, yet he was still burdened by sore anxiety. The architect, too, feared the worst, but by dint of assuring him that he would return at once with full details when he had ascertained the fate of Dion and his betrothed bride, he finally persuaded the old man to give up the night walk through the tempest.

Philotas, with tears in his eyes, begged them to accept his services as messenger or for any other purpose; but Didymus ordered him to go to bed. An opportunity would be found to enable him to atone for the offence so recklessly committed.

The scholar's peaceful home was deprived of its nocturnal repose, and when Gorgias had gone and Didymus had refused Helena's request to have the aged porter take her to her sister, the old man remained alone with his wife in the tablinum.

She had been told nothing except that thieves had attacked her granddaughter, Barine, and slightly wounded her lover; but her own heart and the manner of the husband, at whose side she had grown grey, showed that many things were being concealed. She longed to know the story more

fully, but it was difficult for Didymus to talk a long time in a loud tone, so she silenced her desire to learn the whole truth. But, in order to await the architect's report, they did not go to rest.

Didymus had sunk into an armchair, and Doris sat near at her spindle, but without drawing any threads from her distaff. When she heard her husband sigh and saw him bury his face in his hands, she limped nearer to him, difficult as it was for her to move, and stroked his head, now nearly bald, with her hand. Then she uttered soothing words, and, as the anxious, troubled expression did not yet pass from his wrinkled face, she reminded him in faltering yet tender tones how often they had thought they must despair, and yet everything had resulted well.

"Ah! husband," she added, "I know full well that the clouds hanging over us are very black, and I cannot even see them clearly, because you show them at such a distance. Yet I feel that they threaten us with sore tribulation. But, after all, what harm can they do us, if we only keep close together, we two old people and the children of the children whom Hades rent from us? We need only to grow old to perceive that life has a head with many faces. The ugly one of to-day can last no longer than you can keep that deeply furrowed brow. But you need not coerce yourself for my sake, husband. Let it be so. I need merely close my eyes to see how smooth and

beautiful it was in youth, and how pleasant it will look when better days say, 'Here we are!'"

Didymus, with a mournful smile, kissed her grey hair and shouted into her left ear, which was a little less deaf than the other:

"How young you are still, wife!"

CHAPTER X.

THE tempest swept howling from the north across the island of Pharos, and the shallows of Diabathra in the great harbour of Alexandria. The water, usually so placid, rose in high waves, and the beacon on the lighthouse of Sastratus sent the rent abundance of its flames with hostile impetuosity towards the city. The fires in the pitch-pans and the torches on the shore sometimes seemed on the point of being extinguished, at others burst with a doubly brilliant blaze through the smoke which obscured them.

The royal harbour, a fine basin which surrounded in the form of a semicircle the southern part of the Lochias and a portion of the northern shore of the Bruchium, was brightly illuminated every night; but this evening there seemed to be an unusual movement among the lights on its western shore, the private anchorage of the royal fleet.

Was it the storm that stirred them? No. How could the wind have set one torch in the place of another, and moved lights or lanterns in a direction opposite to its violent course? Only a few per-

sons, however, perceived this; for, though joyous anticipation or anxious fears urged many thither, who would venture upon the quay on such a tempestuous night? Besides, no one would have found admittance to the royal port, which was closed on all sides. Even the mole which, towards the west, served as the string to the bow of land surrounding it, had but a single opening and—as every one knew—that was closed by a chain in the same way as the main entrance to the harbour between the Pharos and Alveus Steganus.

About two hours before midnight, spite of the increasing fury of the tempest, the singular movement of the lights diminished, but rarely had the hearts of those for whom they burned throbbed so anxiously. These were the dignitaries and court officials who stood nearest to Cleopatra—about twenty men and a single woman, Iras. Mardion and she had summoned them because the Queen's letter permitted those to whom she had given authority to offer her a quiet reception. After a long consultation they had not invited the commanders of the little Roman garrison left behind. It was doubtful whether those whom they expected would return that night, and the Roman soldiers who were loyal to Antony had gone with him to the war.

The hall in the centre of the private roadstead of the royal harbour, where they had assembled, was furnished with regal magnificence; for it was

a favourite resort of the Queen. The spacious apartment lacked no requisite of comfort, and most of those who were waiting used the well-cushioned couches, while others, harassed by mental anxiety, paced to and fro.

As the room had remained unused for months, bats had made nests there, and now that it was lighted, dazzled by the glare of the lamps and candles, they darted to and fro above the heads of the assembly. Iras had ordered the commander of the Mellakes, or youths, a body-guard composed of the sons of aristocratic Macedonian families, to expel the troublesome creatures, and it diverted the thoughts of these devoted soldiers of the Queen to strike at them with their swords.

Others preferred to watch this futile battle rather than give themselves up to the anxiety which filled their minds. The Regent was gazing mutely at the ground; Iras, pale and absent-minded, was listening to Zeno's statements; and Archibius had gone out of doors, and, unheeding the storm, was looking across the tossing waves of the harbour for the expected ships.

In a wooden shed, whose roof was supported by gaily painted pillars, through which the wind whistled, the servants, from the porters to the litter-bearers, had gathered in groups under the flickering light of the lanterns. The Greeks sat on wooden stools, the Egyptians upon mats on the floor. The largest circle contained the parties who

attended to the Queen's luggage and the upper servants, among whom were several maids.

They had been told that the Queen was expected that night, because it was possible that the strong north wind would bear her ship home with unexpected speed after the victory. But they were better informed: palaces have chinks in doors and curtains, and are pervaded by a very peculiar echo which bears even a whisper distinctly from ear to ear.

The body-slave of the commander-in-chief Seleukus was the principal spokesman. His master had reached Alexandria but a few hours ago from the frontier fortress of Pelusium, which he commanded. A mysterious order from Lucilius, Antony's most faithful friend, brought from Taenarum by a swift galley, had summoned him hither.

The freedman Beryllus, a loquacious Sicilian, who, as an actor, had seen better days ere pirates robbed him of his liberty, had heard many new things, and his hearers listened eagerly; for ships coming from the north, which touched at Pelusium, had confirmed and completed the evil tidings that had penetrated the Sebasteum.

According to his story, he was as well informed as if he had been an eye-witness of the naval battle; for he had been present during his master's conversation with many ship-captains and messengers from Greece. He even assumed the air of a loyal, strictly silent servant, who would only ven-

ture to confirm and deny what the Alexandrians had already learned. Yet his knowledge consisted merely of a confused medley of false and true occurrences. While the Egyptian fleet had been defeated at Actium, and Antony, flying with Cleopatra, had gone first to Tænarum at the end of the Peloponnesian coast, he asserted that the army and fleet had met on the Peloponnesian coast and Octavianus was pursuing Antony, who had turned towards Athens, while Cleopatra was on her way to Alexandria.

His "trustworthy intelligence" had been patched together from a few words caught from Seleukus at table, or while receiving and dismissing messengers. In other matters his information was more accurate.

While for several days the harbour of Alexandria had been closed, vessels were permitted to enter Pelusium, and all captains of newly arrived ships and caravans were compelled to report to Beryllus's master, the commandant of the important frontier fortress.

He had quitted Pelusium the night before. The strong wind had driven the trireme before it so swiftly that it was difficult for even the seagulls to follow. It was easy for the listeners to believe this; for the storm outside howled louder and louder, whistling through the open hall where the servants had gathered. Most of the lamps and torches had been blown out, the pitch-pans only

sent forth still blacker clouds of smoke, lit by red and yellow flames, and the closed lanterns alone continued to diffuse a flickering light. So the wide space, dim with smoke, was illumined only by a dull, varying glimmer.

One of the porters had furnished wine to shorten the hours of waiting; but it could only be drunk in secret, so there were no goblets. The jars wandered from mouth to mouth, and every sip was welcome, for the wind blew keenly, and besides, the smoke irritated their throats.

The freedman, Beryllus, was often interrupted by paroxysms of coughing, especially from the women, while relating the evil omens which were told to his master in Pelusium. Each was well authenticated and surpassed its predecessor in significance.

Here one of Iras's maids interrupted him to tell the story of the swallows on the "Antonius," Cleopatra's admiral galley. He could scarcely report from Pelusium an omen of darker presage.

But Beryllus gazed at her with a pitying smile, which so roused the expectations of the others that the overseer of the litter and baggage porters, who were talking loudly together, hoarsely shouted, "Silence!"

Soon no sound was heard in the open space save the shrill whistling of the wind, a word of command to the harbour-guards, and the freedman's

voice, which he lowered to increase the charm of the mysterious events he was describing.

He began with the most fulsome praise of Cleopatra and Antony, reminding his hearers that the Imperator was a descendant of Herakles. The Alexandrians especially were aware that their Queen and Antony claimed and desired to be called "The new Isis" and "The new Dionysus." But every one who beheld the Roman must admit that in face and figure he resembled a god far more than a man.

The Imperator had appeared as Dionysus, especially to the Athenians. In the proscenium of the theatre in that city was a huge bas-relief of the Battle of the Giants, the famous work of an ancient sculptor—he, Beryllus, had seen it—and from amid the numerous figures in this piece of sculpture the tempest had torn but a single one—which? Dionysus, the god as whose mortal image Antony had once caroused in a vine-clad arbour in the presence of the Athenians. The storm to-night was at the utmost like the breath of a child, compared with the hurricane which could wrest from the hard marble the form of Dionysus. But Nature gathers all her forces when she desires to announce to short-sighted mortals the approach of events which are to shake the world.

The last words were quoted from his master, who had studied in Athens. They had escaped from his burdened soul when he heard of another

portent, of which a ship from Ostia had brought tidings. The flourishing city Pisaura——

Here, however, he was interrupted, for several of those present had learned, weeks before, that this place had sunk in the sea, but merely pitied the unfortunate inhabitants.

Beryllus quietly permitted them to free themselves from the suspicion that people in Alexandria had had tidings of so remarkable an event later than those in Pelusium, and at first answered their query what this had to do with the war merely by a shrug of the shoulders; but when the overseer of the porters also put the question, he went on: "The omen made a specially deep impression upon our minds, for we know what Pisaura is, or rather how it came into existence. The hapless city which dark Hades ingulfed really belonged to Antony, for in the days of its prosperity he was its founder."

He measured the group with a defiant glance, and there was no lack of evidences of horror; nay, one of the maid-servants shrieked aloud, for the storm had just snatched a torch from the iron rings in the wall and hurled it on the floor close beside the listener.

Suspense seemed to have reached its height. Yet it was evident that Beryllus had not yet drawn his last arrow from the quiver.

The maid-servant, whose scream had startled the others, had regained her composure and seemed eager to hear some other new and terrible omen,

for, with a beseeching glance, she begged the freedman not to withhold the other things he knew.

He pointed to the drops of perspiration which, spite of the wind sweeping through the hall, covered her brow: "You must use your handkerchief. Merely listening to my tale will dampen your skin. Stone statues are made of harder material, but a soul dwells within them too. Their natures may be harsher or more gentle; they bring us woe or heal heavy sorrows, according to their mood. Every one learns this who raises his hands to them in prayer. One of these statues stands in Alba. It represents Mark Antony, in whose honour it was erected by the city. And it foresaw what menaced the man whose stone double it is. Ay, open your ears! About four days ago a ship's captain came to my master and in my presence this man reported—he grew as pale as ashes while he spoke—what he himself had witnessed. Drops of perspiration had oozed from the statue of Antony in Alba. Horror seized all the citizens; men and women came to wipe the brow and cheeks of the statue, but the drops of perspiration did not cease to drip, and this continued several days and nights. The stone image had felt what was impending over the living Mark Antony. It was a horrible spectacle, the man said."

Here the speaker paused, and the group of listeners started, for the clang of a gong was heard

outside, and the next instant all were on their feet hastening to their posts.

The officials in the magnificent hall had also risen. Here the silence had been interrupted only by low whispers. The colour had faded from most of the grave, anxious faces, and their timid glances shunned one another.

Archibius had first perceived, by the flames of the Pharos, the red glimmer which announced the approach of the royal galley. It had not been expected so early, but was already passing the islands into the great harbour. It was probably the Antonius, the ship on which the old swallows had pecked the young ones to death.

Though the waves were running high, even in the sheltered harbour, they scarcely rocked the massive vessel. An experienced pilot must have steered it past the shallows and cliffs on the eastern side of the roadstead, for instead of passing around the island of Antirrhodus as usual, it kept between the island and the Lochias, steering straight towards the entrance into the little royal harbour. The pitch-pans on both sides had been filled with fresh resin and tow to light the way. The watchers on the shore could now see its outlines distinctly.

It was the Antonius, and yet it was not.

Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who was standing beside Iras, wrapped his cloak closer around his shivering limbs, pointed to it, and whispered,

"Like a woman who leaves her parents' house in the rich array of a bride, and returns to it an impoverished widow."

Iras drew herself up, and with cutting harshness replied, "Like the sun veiled by mists, but which will soon shine forth again more radiantly than ever."

"Spoken from the depths of my soul," said the old courtier eagerly, "so far as the Queen is concerned. Of course, I did not allude to her Majesty, but to the ship. You were ill when it left the harbour, garlanded with flowers and adorned with purple sails. And now! Even this flickering light shows the wounds and rents. I am the last person whom you need tell that our sun Cleopatra will soon regain its old radiance, but at present it is very chilly and cold here by the water's edge in this stormy air; and when I think of our first moment of meeting——"

"Would it were over!" murmured Iras, wrapping herself closer in her cloak. Then she drew back shivering, for the rattle of the heavy chain, which was drawn aside from the opening of the harbour, echoed with an uncanny sound through the silence of the night. A mountain seemed to weigh upon the watchers' breasts, for the wooden monster which now entered the little harbour moved forward as slowly and silently as a spectral ship. It seemed as if life were extinct on the huge galley usually swarming with a numerous

crew; as if a vessel were about to cast anchor whose sailors had fallen victims to the plague. Nothing was heard save an occasional word of command, and the signal whistles of the flute-player who directed the rowers. A few lanterns burned with a wavering light on the vast length of her decks. The brilliant illumination which usually shone through the darkness would have attracted the attention of the Alexandrians.

Now it was close to the landing. The group on shore watched every inch of its majestic progress with breathless suspense, but when the first rope was flung to the slaves on shore several men in Greek robes pressed forward hurriedly among the courtiers.

They had come with a message, whose importance would permit no delay, to the Regent Mardion, who stood between Zeno and Iras, gazing gloomily at the ground with a frowning brow. He was pondering over the words in which to address the Queen, and within a few minutes the ship would have made her landing, and Cleopatra might cross the bridge. To disturb him at that moment was an undertaking few who knew the irritable, uncertain temper of the eunuch would care to risk. But the tall Macedonian, who for a short time attracted the eyes of most of the spectators from the galley, ventured to do so. It was the captain of the night-watch, the aristocratic commander of the police force of the city.

"Only a word, my lord," he whispered to the Regent, "though the time may be inopportune."

"As inopportune as possible," replied the eunuch with repellent harshness.

"We will say as inopportune as the degree of haste necessary for its decision. The King Cæsarion, with Antyllus and several companions, attacked a woman. Blackened faces. A fight. Cæsarion and the woman's companion—an aristocrat, member of the Council—slightly wounded. Lictors interfered just in time. The young gentlemen were arrested. At first they refused to give their names——"

"Cæsarion slightly, *really* only slightly wounded?" asked the eunuch with eager haste.

"Really and positively. Olympus was summoned at once. A knock on the head. The man who was attacked flung him on the pavement in the struggle."

"Dion, the son of Eumenes, is the man," interrupted Iras, whose quick ear had caught the officer's report. "The woman—is Barine, the daughter of the artist Leonax."

"Then you know already?" asked the Macedonian in surprise.

"So it seems," answered Mardion, gazing into the girl's face with a significant glance. Then, turning to her rather than to the Macedonian, he added, "I think we will have the young rascals

set free and brought to Lochias with as little publicity as possible."

"To the palace?" asked the Macedonian.

"Of course," replied Iras firmly. "Each to his own apartments, where they must remain until further orders."

"Everything else must be deferred until after the reception," added the eunuch, and the Macedonian, with a slight, haughty nod, drew back.

"Another misfortune," sighed the eunuch.

"A boyish prank," Iras answered quickly, "but even a still greater misfortune is less than nothing so long as we are not conscious of it. This unpleasant occurrence must be concealed for the present from the Queen. Up to this time it is a vexation, nothing more—and it can and must remain so; for we have it in our power to uproot the poisonous tree whence it emanates."

"You look as if no one could better perform the task," the Regent interrupted, with a side glance at the galley, "so you shall have the commission. It is the last one I shall give, during the Queen's absence, in her name."

"I shall not fail," she answered firmly.

When Iras again looked towards the landing-place she saw Archibius standing alone, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. Impulse prompted her to tell her uncle what had happened; but at the first step she paused, and her thin lips uttered a firm "No."

Her friend had become a stone in her path. If necessary, she would find means to thrust him also aside, spite of his sister Charmian and the old tie which united him to Cleopatra. He had grown weak, Charmian had always been so.

She would have had time enough now to consider what step to take first, had not her heart ached so sorely.

After the huge galley lay moored, several minutes elapsed ere two *pastophori* of the goddess Isis, who guarded the goblet of Nektanebus, taken from the temple treasures and borne along in a painted chest, stepped upon the bridge, followed by Cleopatra's first chamberlain, who in a low tone announced the approach of the Queen and commanded the waiting groups to make way. A double line of torch-bearers had been stationed from the landing to the gate leading into the Bruchium, and the other on the north, which was the entrance to the palaces on the Lochias, since it was not known where Cleopatra would desire to go. The chamberlain, however, said that she would spend the night at Lochias, where the children lived, and ordered all the flickering, smoking torches, save a few, to be extinguished.

Mardion, the Keeper of the Seal, Archibius, and Iras were standing by the bridge a little in advance of the others, when voices were heard on the ship, and the Queen appeared, preceded by several

lantern-bearers and followed by a numerous train of court officials, pages, maids, and female slaves. Cleopatra's little hand rested on Charmian's arm, as, with a haughty carriage of the head, she moved towards the shore. A thick veil covered her face, and a large, dark cloak concealed her figure. How elastic her step was still! how proud yet graceful was the gesture with which she waved a greeting to Mardion and Zeno!

Extending her hand to raise Iras, who had sunk prostrate before her, she kissed her on the forehead, whispering, "The children?"

"All is well with them," replied the girl.

Then the returning sovereign greeted the others with a gracious gesture, but vouchsafed a word to no one until the eunuch stepped before her to deliver his address of welcome. She motioned him aside with a curt "Later"; and when Zeno held open the door of the litter, she said in a stifled tone: "I will walk. After the rocking of the galley in this tempest, I feel reluctant to enter the litter. There are many things to be considered to-day. An idea came to me on the way home. Summon the captain of the harbour and his chief counsellors, the heads of the war office, the superintendent of the fortifications on land and water, especially the Aristarch and Gorgias—I want to see them. Time presses. They must be here in two hours—no, in an hour and a half. I wish to examine all their plans and charts of the eastern

frontier, especially the river channels and canals in the Delta."

Then she turned to Archibius, who had approached the litter, laid her hand upon his arm, and though her veil prevented him from seeing her sparkling eyes, he felt them shining deep into his heart, as the voice whose melody had often enthralled his soul cried, "We will take it as a favourable omen that it is again *you* who lead me to this palace in a time of trouble."

His overflowing heart found expression in the warm reply, "Whenever it may be, forever and ever this arm and this life are yours!" And the Queen answered in a tone of earnest belief, "I know it."

Then, with her hand still resting on his arm, she moved forward; but when he began to ask whether she really had cause to speak of a time of trouble, she cut him short with the entreaty: "Not now. Let us say nothing. It is worse than bad—as evil as possible. Yet no. Few are permitted, in an hour of trouble, to lean on the arm of a faithful friend."

The words were accompanied with a light pressure of her little hand, and it seemed as if his old heart was growing young.

He dared not speak, for her wish was law; but while moving silently at her side, first along the shore, then through the gate, and finally over the marble flagstones which led to the palace portal, it

seemed as if he beheld, instead of the veiled head of the hapless Queen, the soft, light-brown locks which floated around the face of a happy child. Before his mental vision rose the little mistress of the garden of Epicurus. He saw the sparkle of her large blue eyes, which never ceased to question, yet appeared to contain the mystery of the world. He fancied he heard once more the silvery cadence of her voice and the bewitching magic of her pure, childlike laughter, and it was hard to remember what she had become.

Snatched away from the present, yet conscious that Fate had granted him a great boon in this sorrowful hour, he moved on at her side and led her through the main entrance, the spacious inner court-yard of the palace. At the rear was the great door opening into the Queen's apartments, before which Mardion, Iras, and their companions had already stationed themselves. At the left was a smaller one leading into the wing occupied by the children.

Archibius was about to conduct Cleopatra across the lighted court-yard, but she motioned towards the children's rooms, and he understood her.

At the threshold her hand fell from his arm, and when he bowed as if to retire, she said kindly: "There is Charmian. You both deserve to accompany me to the spot where childhood is dreaming and peace of mind and painlessness have their

abode. But respect for the Queen has prevented the brother and sister from greeting each other after so long a separation. Do so now! Then, follow me."

While speaking, she hastened with the swift step of youth into the atrium and up the staircase which led to the sleeping-rooms of the princes and princesses.

Archibius and Charmian obeyed her bidding; the brother clasped his sister affectionately in his arms, and in hurried tones, with tears streaming from her eyes, she informed him that to her all seemed lost.

Antony had behaved in a manner for which no words of condemnation or regret were adequate. Probably he would follow Cleopatra; the fleet, and perhaps the army also, were destroyed. Her fate lay in the hands of Octavianus.

Then she preceded him towards the staircase, where Iras was standing with a tall Syrian, who bore a striking resemblance to Philostratus, Barine's former husband. It was his brother Alexas, the trusted favourite of Mark Antony. His place should now have been with him, and Archibius asked his sister with a hasty look how this man chanced to be in the Queen's train.

"His skill in reading the stars," was the reply. "His flattering tongue. He is a parasite of the worst kind, but he tells her many things, he diverts her, and she tolerates him near her person."

As soon as Iras saw the direction in which Cleopatra had turned, she had hastened after her to accompany her to the children. The Syrian Alexas had stopped her to express his joy in meeting her again. Even before the outbreak of the war he had devoted himself zealously to her, and he now plainly showed that during the long period of separation his feelings had by no means cooled. Like his brother, he had a head too small for his body, but his well-formed features were animated by a pair of eyes sparkling with a keen, covetous expression.

Iras, too, seemed glad to welcome the favourite, but ere the brother and sister reached the staircase she left him to embrace Charmian, her aunt and companion, with the affection of a daughter.

They found the Queen in the anteroom of the children's apartments. Euphronion, their tutor, had awaited her there, and hurriedly gave, in the most rapturous terms, his report of them and the wonderful gifts which became more and more apparent in each, now as a heritage from their mother, now from their father.

Cleopatra had interrupted the torrent of his enthusiastic speech with many a question, meanwhile endeavouring to loose the veil wound about her head; but the little hands, unaccustomed to the task, failed. Iras noticed it from the stairs and, hastening up the last steps, skilfully released her from the long web of lace.

The Queen acknowledged the service by a gracious nod, but when the chief eunuch opened the door leading into the children's rooms, she called joyously to the brother and sister, "Come!" The tutor, who was obliged to leave the charge of his pupils' sleeping apartments to the eunuchs and nurses, drew back, but Iras felt it a bitter affront to be excluded from this visit. Her cheeks flushed and paled; her thin lips were more firmly compressed, and she gazed intently at the basket of fruit in the mosaic floor at her feet as if she were counting the cherries that filled it. But she suddenly pushed the little curls back from her forehead, darted swiftly down the stairs, and called to Alexas just as he was about to leave the atrium.

The Syrian hastened towards her, extolling the good fortune that made his sun rise for him a second time that night, but she cut him short with the words: "Cease this foolish love-making. It would be far better for us both to become allies in serious, bitter earnest. I am ready."

"So am I!" cried the Syrian rapturously, pressing his hand upon his heart.

Meanwhile Cleopatra had entered the chamber where the children lay sleeping. Deep silence pervaded the lofty hall hung with bright-hued carpets, and softly lighted by three lamps with rose-colored globes. An arch, supported by pillars of Libyan marble, divided the wide space. In the first, near a window closely muffled with draperies, stood two

ivory beds, surmounted with crowns of gold and silver set with pearls and turquoises. Around the edge, carved by the hands of a great artist, ran a line of happy children dancing to the songs of birds in blossoming bushes.

The couches were separated by a heavy curtain which the eunuchs had raised at the approach of the Queen. Cleopatra could now see them all at a single glance, and the picture was indeed one of exquisite charm; for on these beautiful couches slept the twins, the ten-year-old children of Cleopatra and Antony—Antonius Helios and Cleopatra Selene. The girl was pink and white, fair and wonderfully lovely; the boy no less beautiful, but with ebon-black hair, like his father. Both curly heads were turned towards the side, and rested on a dimpled hand pressed upon the silken pillow.

Upon a third bed, beyond the arch, was Alexander, the youngest prince, a lovely boy of six, the Queen's darling.

After gazing a long while at the twins, and pressing a light kiss upon cheeks flushed with slumber, she turned to the youngest child and sank beside his couch as if forced to bend the knee before some apparition which Heaven had vouchsafed to her. Tears streamed from her eyes as, drawing the child carefully towards her, she kissed his mouth, eyes, and cheeks, and then laid him gently back upon the pillows. The boy, however, did not instantly relapse into slumber, but threw his little

plump arms around his mother's neck, murmuring incomprehensible words. She joyously submitted to his caresses, till sleep again overpowered him, and his little hands fell back upon the bed.

She lingered a short time longer, with her brow resting on the ivory of the couch, praying for this child and his brother and sister. When she rose again her cheeks were wet with tears, and she pressed her hand upon her breast. Then, beckoning to Charmian and Archibius, she motioned towards Alexander and the twins, saying, as she saw tears glittering in the eyes of both: "I know you have lost this happiness for my sake. For each one of these children a great empire would not be too high a price; for them all—— What does earth contain that I would not bestow? Yet what can I still call my own?"

Her smiling face clouded as she asked the question. The vision of the lost battle again rose before her mind. Her own power was lost, forfeited, and with it the independence of the native land which she loved. Rome was already stretching out her hand to add it to the others as a new province. But this should not be! Her twin children yonder, sleeping beneath crowns, must *wear* them! And the boy slumbering on the pillows? How many kingdoms Antony had bestowed! What remained for her to give?

Again she bent to the child. A beautiful dream must have hovered over him, for he was smiling in

his sleep. A flood of maternal love welled up in her agitated heart, and, as she saw the companions of her childhood also gazing tenderly at the little sleeper, she remembered the days of her own youth, and the quiet happiness which she had enjoyed in her garden of Epicurus.

Power and splendour had begun for her beyond its confines, but the greater the heights of worldly grandeur she attained, the more distant, the more irrecoverable became the consciousness of the happiness which she had once gratefully enjoyed, and for which she had never ceased to long. And as she now gazed once more at the peaceful, smiling face, whence all pain and anxiety seemed worlds away, and all the love which her heart contained appeared to be pouring towards him, the question arose in her mind whether this boy, for whom she possessed no crown, might not be the only happy mortal of them all—happy in the sense of the master. Deeply moved by this thought, she turned to Archibius and Charmian, exclaiming in a subdued tone, in order not to rouse the sleeper: "Whatever destiny may await us, I commend this child to your special love and care. If Fate denies him the lustre of the crown and the elation of power, teach him to enjoy that other happiness, which—how long ago it is!—your father unfolded to his mother."

Archibius kissed her robe, and Charmian her hands; but Cleopatra, drawing a long breath, said: "The mother has already taken too much time

from the Queen. I have ordered the news of my arrival to be kept from Cæsarion. This was well. The most important matters will be settled before our meeting. Everything relating to me and to the state must be decided within an hour. But, first, I am something more than mother and Queen. The woman also asserts her claim. I will find time for you, my friend, to-morrow!—To my chamber first, Charmian. But you need rest still more than I. Go with your brother. Send Iras to me. She will be glad to use her skilful fingers again in her mistress's service."

CHAPTER XI.

THE Queen had left her bath. Iras had arranged the still abundant waves of her hair, now dark-brown in hue, and robed her magnificently to receive the dignitaries whom, spite of the late hour of the night, she expected.

How wonderfully she had retained her beauty! It seemed as if Time had not ventured to touch this masterpiece of feminine loveliness; yet the Greek's keen eye detected here and there some token of the vanishing spell of youth. She loved her mistress, yet her inmost soul rejoiced whenever she detected in her the same changes which began to appear in herself, the woman of seven-and-twenty, so many years her sovereign's junior. She would gladly have given Cleopatra everything at her command, yet she felt as if she must praise Nature for an act of justice, when she perceived that even her royal favourite was not wholly relieved from the law which applied to all.

"Cease your flattery," said Cleopatra, smiling mournfully. "They say that the works of the Pharaohs here on the Nile flout Time. The inex-

orable destroyer is less willing to permit this from the Queen of Egypt. These are grey hairs, and they came from this head, however eagerly you may deny it. Whose save my own are these lines around the corners of the eyes and on the brow? What say you to the tooth which my lips do not hide so kindly as you assert? It was injured the night before the luckless battle. My dear, faithful, skilful Olympus, the prince of leeches, is the only one who can conceal such things. But it would not do to take the old man to the war, and Glaucus is far less adroit. How I missed Olympus during those fatal hours! I seemed a monster even to myself, and he—Antony's eye is only too keen for such matters. What *is* the love of men? A blackened tooth may prove its destruction. An aspect obnoxious to the gaze will pour water on the fiercest fire. What hours I experienced, Iras! Many a glance from him seemed an insult, and, besides, my heart was filled with torturing anxiety.

"Something had evidently come between us! I felt it. The trouble began soon after he left Alexandria. It gnawed my soul like a worm, and now that I am here again I must see clearly. He will follow me in a few days, I know. Pinarius Scarpus, with his untouched legions, is in Parætonium, whither he went. At Tænarum he resolved to retire from the world which he, on whom it had bestowed so much that is great, hates because he

has given it cause for many a shake of the head. But the old spirit woke again, and if Fortune, usually so faithful, still aids him, a large force will soon join the new African army. The Asiatic princes—— But the ruler of the state must be silent. I entered this room to give the woman her just rights, and the woman shall have them. He will soon be here. He cannot live without me. It is not alone the beaker of Nektanebus which draws him after me!"

"When the greatest of the great, Julius Cæsar, sued for your love in Alexandria, and Antony on the Cydnus, you did not possess the goblet," observed Iras. "It is two years since Anubis permitted you to borrow the masterpiece from the temple treasures, and within a few days you will be obliged to restore it. That a mysterious spell emanates from the cup is certain, but one still more powerful dwells in the magic of your own nature."

"Would that it might assert itself to-day!" cried the Queen. "At any rate the power of the beaker impelled Antony to do many things. I am not vain enough to believe that it was love, that it was solely the spell of my own personality which drew him to me in that disastrous hour. That battle, that incomprehensible, disgraceful battle! You were ill, and could not see our fleet when it set sail; but even experienced spectators said that handsomer, larger vessels were never beheld. I was right in insisting that the decision of the conflict

should be left to them. I was entitled to call them mine. Had we conquered, what a proud delight it would have been to say, 'The weapons which you gave to the man you loved gained him the sovereignty of the world!' Besides, the stars had assured me that good fortune would attend us on the sea. They had given the same message to Anubis here, and to Alexas upon Antony's galley. I also trusted the spell of the goblet, which had already compelled Antony to do many things he opposed. So I succeeded in having the decision of the conflict left to the fleet, but the prediction was false, false, false!—how utterly, was to be proved only too soon.

"If I had only been told in time what I learned later! After the defeat people were more loquacious. That one remark of a veteran commander of the foot-soldiers would probably have sufficed to open my eyes. He had asked Mark Antony why he fixed his hopes on miserable wood, exclaiming, 'Let the Phœnicians and Egyptians war on the water, but leave *us* the land where we are accustomed, with our feet firmly set upon the earth, to fight, conquer, or die!' This alone, I am sure, would have changed my resolve in a happy hour. But it was kept from me.

"The conflict began. Our troops had lost patience. The left wing of the fleet advanced. At first I watched the battle eagerly, with a throbbing heart. How proudly the huge galleys moved for-

ward! Everything was going admirably. Antony had made an address, assuring the warriors that, even without soldiers, our ships would destroy the foe by their mere height and size. What orator can so carry his hearers with him! I, too, was still fearless. Who cherishes anxiety when confidently expecting victory? When he went on board his own ship, after bidding me farewell far less cordially than usual, I became more troubled. I thought it was evident that his love was waning. What had I become since we left Alexandria, and Olympus no longer attended me! Matters could not continue in this way. I would leave the direction of the war to him, and vanish from his eyes. After he had looked into the beaker of Nektanebus, he yielded to my will, but often with indignation. The unconcealed, ineffaceable lines, and the years, the cruel years!"

"What thoughts are these?" cried Iras. "Let me take oath, my sovereign mistress, that as you stand before me——"

"Thanks to this toilet-table and the new compounds of Olympus in these boxes! At that time, I tell you, I was fairly startled at the sight of my own face. Trouble does not enhance beauty, and what condemnation the Romans had heaped on the woman who meddled with war, the craft of man! I had answers for them, but I would not endure it longer. I had previously determined to hold aloof from the battle on land; but even at the com-

mencement of the conflict, spite of its favourable promise, I longed to leave Antony and return to the children. They do not heed the colour of their mother's hair, nor her wrinkles; and he, when he had looked for and called me in vain, would feel for the first time what he possessed in me, would miss me, and with the longing the old love would awaken with fresh ardour. As soon as the fleet had gained the victory I would have the prow of my galley turned southward and, without a farewell, exclaiming only, 'We will meet in Alexandria!' set sail for Egypt.

"I summoned Alexas, who had remained with me, and ordered him to give me a signal as soon as the battle was decided in our favour. I remained on deck. Then I saw the ships of the foe describing a wide circle. The *nauarch* told me that Agrippa was trying to surround us. This roused a feeling of discomfort. I began to repent having meddled with men's work.

"Antony looked across at me from his galley. I waved my hand to point out the peril, but instead of eagerly and lovingly answering the greeting, as of yore, he turned his back, and in a short time after the wildest uproar arose around me. One ship became entangled with another, planks and poles shattered with a loud crash. Shouts, the cries and moans of the combatants and the wounded, mingled with the thunder of the stones hurled by the catapults, and the sharp notes of the signals

which sounded like calls for help. Two soldiers, stricken by arrows, fell beside me. It was horrible! Yet my courage remained steadfast, even when a squadron—it was commanded by Aruntius—pressed upon the fleet. I saw another line of galleys steering directly towards us, and a Roman vessel assailed by one of mine—I had named her the Selene—turn on her side and sink. This pleased me and seemed like the first presage of victory. I again ordered Alexas to have the ship's prow turned as soon as the result of the battle was decided. Ere I had ceased speaking, Jason, the steward—you know him—appeared with refreshments. I took the beaker, but, ere I could raise it to my lips, he fell to the deck with a cloven skull, mingling his blood with the spilled juice of the grape. My blood seemed fairly to freeze in my veins, and Alexas, trembling and deadly pale, asked, 'Do you command us to quit the battle?'

"Every fibre of my being urged me to give the order, but I controlled myself, and asked the *nauarch*, who was standing on the bridge before me, 'Are we gaining the advantage?' The reply was a positive 'Yes.' I thought the fitting time had come, and called to him to steer the galley southward. But the man did not seem to understand. Meanwhile the noise of the conflict had grown louder and louder. So, in spite of Charmian, who besought me not to interfere in the battle, I sent Alexas to the commander on the bridge, and while

he talked with the grey-bearded seaman, who wrathfully answered I know not what, I glanced at the nearest ship—I no longer knew whether it was friend or foe—and as I saw the rows of restless oars moving in countless numbers to and fro, it seemed as if every ship had become a huge spider, and the long wooden handles of the oars were its legs and feet. Each of these monsters appeared to be seeking to snare me in a horrible net, and when the *nauarch* came to beseech me to wait, I imperiously commanded him to obey my orders.

"The luckless man bowed, and performed his Queen's behest. The giant was turned, and forced a passage through the maze.

"I breathed more freely.

"What had threatened me like the legs of huge spiders became oars once more. Alexas led me under a roof, where no missiles could reach me. My desire was fulfilled. I had escaped Antony's eyes, and we were going towards Alexandria and my children. When I at last looked around I saw that my other ships were following. I had not given this order, and was terribly startled. When I sought Alexas, he had vanished. The centurion whom I sent to order the *nauarch* to give the signal to the other ships to return to the battle, reported that the captain's dead body has just been borne away, but that the command should be given. How this was done I do not know, but it produced

no effect, and no one noticed the anxious waving of my handkerchief.

"We had left Antony's galley—he was standing on the bridge—far behind.

"I had waved my hand as we passed close by, and he hurried down to bend far over the bulwark and shout to me. I can still see his hands raised to his bearded lips. I did not understand what he said, and only pointed southward and in spirit wished him victory and that this separation might tend to the welfare of our love. But he shook his head, pressed his hand despairingly to his brow, and waved his arms as though to give me a sign, but the Antonias swept far ahead of his ship and steered straight towards the south.

"I breathed more freely, in the pleasant consciousness of escaping a twofold danger. Had I remained long before Antony's eyes, looking as I did then, it might——

"Wretched blunder of a wretched woman, I say now. But at that time I could not suspect what a terrible doom I had brought down in that hour upon ourselves, my children, perhaps the whole world; so I remained under the thrall of these petty fears and thoughts until wounded men were carried past me. The sight distressed me; you know how sensitive I am, and with what difficulty I endure and witness suffering.

"Charmian led me to the cabin. There I first realized what I had done. I had hoped to aid in

crushing the hated foe, and now perhaps it was I who had built for him the bridge to victory, to sovereignty, to our destruction. Pursued by such thoughts, as if by the Furies, I paced restlessly to and fro.

"Suddenly I heard a loud noise on deck. A crashing blow seemed to shake the huge ship. We were pursued! A Roman galley had boarded mine! This was my thought as I grasped the dagger Antony had given me.

"But Charmian came back with tidings which seemed scarcely less terrible than the baseless fear. I had angrily commanded her to leave me because she had urged me to revoke the command to turn back. Now, deadly pale, she announced that Mark Antony had left his galley, followed me in a little five-oared boat, and come on board our ship.

"My blood froze in my veins.

"He had come, I imagined, to force me to return to the battle and, drawing a long breath, my defiant pride urged me to show him that I was the Queen and would obey only my own will, while my heart impelled me to sink at his feet and beseech him, without heeding me, to issue any order which promised to secure a victory.

"But he did not come.

"I sent Charmian up again. Antony had been unable to continue the conflict when parted from me. Now he sat in front of the cabin with his head resting on his hands, staring at the planks of the

deck like one distraught. He, he—Antony! The bravest horseman, the terror of the foe, let his arms fall like a shepherd-boy whose sheep are stolen by the wolves. Mark Antony, the hero who had braved a thousand dangers, had flung down his sword. Why, why? Because a woman had yielded to idle fears, obeyed the yearning of a mother's heart, and fled? Of all human weaknesses, not one had been more alien than cowardice to the man whose recklessness had led him to many an unprecedented venture. And now? No, a thousand times no! Fire and water would unite sooner than Mark Antony and cowardice! He had been under the coercive power of a demon; a mysterious spell had forced him——."

"The mightiest power, love," interrupted Iras with enthusiastic warmth—"a love as great and overmastering as ever subjugated the soul of man."

"Ay, love," repeated Cleopatra, in a hollow tone. Then her lips curled with a faint tinge of derision, and her voice expressed the very bitterness of doubt, as she continued: "Had it been merely the love which makes two mortals one, transfers the heart of one to the other, it might perchance have borne my timorous soul into the hero's breast! But no. Violent tempests had raged before the battle. It had not been possible always to appear before him in the guise in which we would fain be seen by those whom we love.

Even now, when your skilful hands have served me—there is the mirror—the image it reflects—seems to me like a carefully preserved wreck——"

"O my royal mistress," cried Iras, raising her hands beseechingly, "must I again declare that neither the grey hairs which are again brown, nor the few lines which Olympus will soon render invisible, nor whatever else perhaps disturbs you in the image you behold reflected, impairsyour beauty? Unclouded and secure of victory, the spell of your godlike nature——"

"Cease, cease!" interrupted Cleopatra. "I know what I know. No mortal can escape the great eternal laws of Nature. As surely as birth commences life, everything that exists moves onward to destruction and decay."

"Yet the gods," Iras persisted, "give to their works different degrees of existence. The waterlily blooms but a single day, yet how full of vigour is the sycamore in the garden of the Paneum, which has flourished a thousand years! Not a petal in the blossoms of your youth has faded, and is it conceivable that there is even the slightest diminution in the love of him who cast away all that man holds dearest because he could not endure to part, even for days or weeks, from the woman whom he worshipped?"

"Would that he had done so!" cried Cleopatra mournfully. "But are you so sure that it was love which made him follow me? I am of a dif-

ferent opinion. True love does not paralyze, but doubles the high qualities of man. I learned this when Cæsar was prisoned by a greatly superior force within this very palace, his ships burned, his supply of water cut off. In him also, in Antony, I was permitted to witness this magnificent spectacle twenty—what do I say?—a hundred times, so long as he loved me with all the ardour of his fiery soul. But what happened at Actium? That shameful flight of the cooing dove after his mate, at which generations yet unborn will point in mockery! He who does not see more deeply will attribute to the foolish madness of love this wretched forgetfulness of duty, honour, fame, the present and the future; but I, Iras—and this is the thought which whitens one hair after another, which will speedily destroy the remnant of your mistress's former beauty by the exhaustion of sleepless nights—I know better. It was not love which drew Antony after me, not love that trampled in the dust the radiant image of reckless courage, not love that constrained the demigod to follow the pitiful track of a fugitive woman."

Here her voice fell, and seizing the girl's wrist with a painful pressure, she drew her closer to her side and whispered:

"The goblet of Nektanebus is connected with it. Ay, tremble! The powers that emanate from the glittering wonder are as terrible as they are unnatural. The magic spell exerted by the beaker

has transformed the heroic son of Herakles, the more than mortal, into the whimpering coward, the crushed, broken nonentity I found upon the galley's deck. You are silent? Your nimble tongue finds no reply. How could you have forgotten that you aided me to win the wager which forced Antony to gaze into the beaker before I filled it for him? How grateful I was to Anubis when he finally consented to trust to my care this marvel of the temple treasures, when the first trial succeeded, and Antony, at my bidding, placed the magnificent wreath which he wore upon the bald brow of that crabbed old follower of Aristoteles, Diomedes, whom he detested in his inmost soul! It was scarcely a year ago, and you know how rarely at first I used the power of the terrible vessel. The man whom I loved obeyed my slightest glance, without its aid. But later—before the battle—I felt how gladly he would have sent me, who might ruin all, back to Egypt. Besides, I felt —I have already said so—that something had come between us. Yet, often as he was on the point of sacrificing me to the importunate Romans, I need only bid him gaze into the beaker, and exclaim: 'You will not send me hence. We belong together. Whither one goes, the other will follow!' and he besought me not to leave him. The very morning before the battle I gave him the drinking cup, urging him, whatever might happen, never, never to leave me. And he obeyed this time also, though

the person to whom a magic spell bound him was a fleeing woman. It is terrible. And yet, have I a right to execrate the thrall of the beaker? Scarcely! For without the Magian's glittering vessel—a secret voice in my soul has whispered the warning a thousand times during the sleepless nights—he would have taken another on the galley. And I believe I know this other—I mean the woman whose singing enthralled my heart too at the Adonis festival just before our departure. I noticed the look with which his eyes sought hers. Now I know that it was not merely my old deceitful foe, jealousy, which warned me against her. Alexas, the most faithful of his friends, also confirmed what I merely feared—ah! and he told me other things which the stars had revealed to him. Besides, he knows the siren, for she was the wife of his own brother. To protect his honour, he cast off the coquettish Circe."

"Barine!" fell in resolute tones from the lips of Iras.

"So you know her?" asked Cleopatra, eagerly.

The girl raised her clasped hands beseechingly to the Queen, exclaiming:

"I know this woman only too well, and how my heart rages against her! O my mistress, that I, too, should aid in darkening this hour! Yet it must be said. That Antony visited the singer, and even took his son there more than once, is known throughout the city. Yet that is not the

worst. A Barine entering into rivalry with you! It would be too ridiculous. But what bounds can be set to the insatiate greed of these women? No rank, no age is sacred. It was dull in the absence of the court and the army. There were no men who seemed worth the trouble of catching, so she cast her net for boys, and the one most closely snared was the King Cæsarion."

"Cæsarion!" exclaimed Cleopatra, her pale cheeks flushing. "And his tutor Rhodon? My strict commands?"

"Antyllus secretly presented him to her," replied Iras. "But I kept my eyes open. The boy clung to the singer with insensate passion. The only expedient was to remove her from the city. Archibius aided me."

"Then I shall be spared sending her away."

"Nay, that must still be done; for, on the journey to the country Cæsarion, with several comrades, attacked her."

"And the reckless deed was successful?"

"No, my royal mistress. I wish it had been. A love-sick fool who accompanied her drew his sword in her defence, raised his hand against the son of Cæsar, and wounded him. Calm yourself, I beseech you, I conjure you—the wound is slight. The boy's mad passion makes me far more anxious."

The Queen's pouting scarlet lips closed so firmly that her mouth lost the winning charm which

was peculiar to it, and she answered in a firm, resolute tone: "It is the mother's place to protect the son against the temptress. Alexas is right. Her star stands in the path of mine. A woman like this casts a deep shadow on her Queen's course. I will defend myself. It is she who has placed herself between us; she has won Antony. But no! Why should I blind myself? Time and the charms he steals from women are far more powerful than twenty such little temptresses. Then, there are the circumstances which prevented my concealing the defects that wounded the eyes of this most spoiled of all spoiled mortals. All these things aided the singer. I feel it. In her pursuit of men she had at her command all the means which aid us women to conceal what is unlovely and enhance what is beautiful in a lover's eyes, while I was at a disadvantage, lacking your aid and the long-tested skill of Olympus. The divinity on the ship, amid the raging of the storm, was forced more than once to appear before the worshipper ungarlanded, without ornament for the head, or incense."

"But though she used all the combined arts of Aphrodite and Isis, she could not vie with you, my royal mistress!" cried Iras. "How little is required to delude the senses of one scarcely more than a child!"

"Poor boy!" sighed the Queen, gently. "Had he not been wounded, and were it not so hard to

resign what we love, I should rejoice that he, too, understands how to plan and act. Perhaps—O Iras, would that it might be so!—now that the gate is burst open, the brain and energy of the great Cæsar will enter his living image. As the Egyptians call Horus 'the avenger of his father,' perhaps he may become his mother's defender and avenger. If Cæsar's spirit wakes within him, he will wrest from the dissembler Octavianus the heritage of which the nephew robbed the son. You swear that the wound is but a slight one?"

"The physicians have said so."

"Well, then we will hope so. Let him enter the conflict of life. We will afford him ample opportunity to test his powers. No foolish passion shall prevent the convalescent youth from following his father upward along the pathway of fame. But send for the woman who ensnared him, the audacious charmer whose aspirations mount to those I hold dearest. We will see how she appears beside me!"

"These are grievous times," said Iras, who saw in amazement the Queen's eyes sparkle with the confident light of victory. "Grant your foot its right. Let it crush her! Monsters enough, on whom you cannot set your foot, throng your path. Hence to Hades, in these days of conflict, with all who can be quickly removed!"

"Murder?" asked Cleopatra, her noble brow contracting in a frown.

"If it must be, ay," replied Iras, sharply. "If possible, banishment to an island, an oasis. If necessity requires, to the mines with the siren!"

"If necessity requires?" repeated the Queen. "I think that means, if it proves that she has deserved the harshest punishment."

"She has brought it upon herself by every hour of my sovereign's life clouded through her wiles. In the mines the desire to set snares for husbands and sons soon vanishes."

"And people languish in the most terrible torture till death ends their suffering," added Cleopatra, in a tone of grave reproof. "No, girl, this victory is too easy. I will not send even my foe to death without a hearing, especially at this time, which teaches me what it is to await the verdict of one who is more powerful. This woman who, as it were, summons me to battle, shall have her wish. I am curious to see the singer again, and to learn the means by which she has succeeded in chaining to her triumphal car so many captives, from boys up to the most exacting men."

"What do you intend, my royal mistress?" cried Iras in horror.

"I intend," said Cleopatra imperiously, "to see the daughter of Leonax, the granddaughter of Didymus, two men whom I hold in high esteem, ere I decide her destiny. I wish to behold, test, and judge my rival, heart and mind, ere I condemn her. I will engage in the conflict to which she

challenged the loving wife and mother! But—this is my right—I will compel her to show herself to me as Antony so often saw me during the past few weeks, unaided and unimproved by the arts which we both have at command."

Then, without paying any further heed to her attendant, she went to a window, and, after a swift glance at the sky, added quietly: "The first hour after midnight is drawing to a close. The council will begin immediately. The matter to be under discussion is a venture which might save much from the wreck. The council will last two hours, perchance only one. The singer can wait. Where does she live?"

"In the house which belonged to her father, the artist Leonax, in the garden of the Paneum," replied Iras hoarsely. "But, O my Queen, if ever my opinion had the slightest weight with you——"

"I desire no counsel now, but demand the fulfilment of my orders!" cried Cleopatra resolutely. "As soon as those whom I expect are here——"

The Queen was interrupted by a chamberlain, who announced the arrival of the men whom she had summoned, and Cleopatra bade him tell them that she was on her way to the council chamber. Then she turned again to Iras and in rapid words commanded her to go at once in a closed carriage, accompanied by a reliable person, to Barine's house. She must be brought to the palace without the least delay—Iras would understand—even

if it should be necessary to rouse her from her sleep. "I wish to see her as if a storm had forced her suddenly upon the deck of a ship," she said in conclusion.

Then snatching a small tablet from the dressing-table, she scrawled upon the wax with a rapid hand: "Cleopatra, the Queen, desires to see Barine, the daughter of Leonax, without delay. She must obey any command of Iras, Cleopatra's messenger, and her companion."

Then, closing the diptychon, she handed it to her attendant, asking:

"Whom will you take?"

She answered without hesitation, "Alexas."

"Very well," answered Cleopatra. "Do not allow her a moment for preparations, whatever they may be. But do not forget—I command you—that she is a woman."

With these words she turned to follow the chamberlain, but Iras hurried after her to adjust the diadem upon her head and arrange some of the folds of her robe.

Cleopatra submitted, saying kindly, "Something else, I see, is weighing on your heart."

"O my mistress!" cried the girl. "After these tempests of the soul, these harassing months, you are turning night into day and assuming fresh labours and anxieties. If the leech Olympus——"

"It must be," interrupted Cleopatra kindly. "The last two weeks seemed like a single long

and gloomy night, during which I sometimes left my couch for a few hours. One who seeks to drag what is dearest from the river does not consider whether the cold bath is agreeable. If we succumb, it does not matter whether we are well or ill; if, on the contrary, we succeed in gathering another army and saving Egypt, let it cost health and life. The minutes I intend to grant to the woman will be thrown into the bargain. Whatever may come, I shall be ready to meet my fate. I am at one of life's great turning points. At such a time we fulfil our obligations and demands, both great and small."

A few minutes later Cleopatra entered the throne-room and saluted the men whom she had roused from their slumber in order to lay before them a bold plan which, in the lowest depths of misfortune, her yearning to offer fresh resistance to the victorious foe had caused her vigorous, restless mind to evoke.

When, many years before, the boy with whom, according to her father's will, she shared the throne, and his guardian Pothinus, had compelled her to fly from Alexandria, she had found in the eastern frontier of the Delta, on the isthmus which united Egypt to Asia, the remains of the canal which the energetic Pharaohs of former times had constructed to connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea.

Even at that period she had deemed this ruinous

work worthy of notice, had questioned the Ænites who dwelt there about the remains, and even visited some of them herself during the leisure hours of waiting.

From this survey it had seemed possible, by a great expenditure of labour, to again render navigable the canal which the Pharaohs had used to reach both seas in the same galleys, and by which, less than five hundred years before, Darius, the founder of the Persian Empire, had brought his fleet to his support.

With the tireless desire for knowledge characteristic of her, Cleopatra had sought information concerning all these matters, and in quiet hours had more than once pondered over plans for again uniting the Grecian and Arabian seas.

Clearly, plainly, fully, with more thorough knowledge of many details than even the superintendent of the water works, she explained her design to the assembled professionals. If it proved practicable, the rescued ships of the fleet, with others lying in the roadstead of Alexandria, could be conveyed across the isthmus into the Red Sea, and thus saved to Egypt and withdrawn from the foe. Supported by this force, many things might be attempted, resistance might be considerably prolonged, and the time thus gained used in gathering fresh aid and allies.

If the opportunity to make an attack arrived, a powerful fleet would be at her disposal, for which

smaller ships also should now be built at Klysma, on the basis of the experience gained at Actium.

The men who had been robbed of their night's rest listened in amazement to the melodious words of this woman who, in the deepest disaster, had devised a plan of escape so daring in its grandeur, and understood how to explain it better than any one of their number could have done. They followed every sentence with the keenest attention, and Cleopatra's language grew more impassioned, gained greater power and depth, the more plainly she perceived the unfeigned, enthusiastic admiration paid her by her listeners.

Even the oldest and most experienced men did not consider the surprising proposal utterly impossible and impracticable. Some, among them Gorgias, who during the restoration of the Serapeum had helped his father on the eastern frontier of the Delta, and thus became familiar with the neighbourhood of Heroonopolis, feared the difficulties which an elevation of the earth in the centre of the isthmus would place in the way of the enterprise. Yet, why should an undertaking which was successful in the days of Sesostris appear unattainable?

The shortness of the time at their disposal was a still greater source of anxiety, and to this was added the information that one hundred and twenty thousand workmen had perished during the restoration of the canal which Pharaoh Necho

nearly completed. The water way was not finished at that period, because an oracle had asserted that it would benefit only the foreigners, the Phœnicians.

All these points were duly considered, but could not shake the opinion that, under specially favourable conditions, the Queen's plan would be practicable; though, to execute it, obstacles mountain-high were to be conquered. All the labourers in the fields, who had not been pressed into the army, must be summoned to the work.

Not an hour's delay was permitted. Where there was no water to bear the ships, an attempt must be made to convey them across the land. There was no lack of means. The mechanics who had understood how to move the obelisks and colossi from the cataract to Alexandria, could here again find opportunity to test their brains and former skill.

Never had Cleopatra's kindling spirit roused more eager, nay, more passionate sympathy, in any counsellors gathered around her than during this nocturnal meeting, and when at last she paused, the loud acclamations of excited men greeted her. The Queen's return, and the tidings of the lost battle which she had communicated, were to be kept secret.

Gorgias had been appointed one of the directors of the enterprise, and the intellect, voice, and winning charm of Cleopatra had so enraptured him

that he already fancied he saw the commencement of a new love which would be fatal to his regard for Helena.

It was foolish to raise his wishes so high, but he told himself that he had never beheld a woman more to be desired. Yet he cherished a very warm memory of the philosopher's granddaughter, and lamented that he would scarcely find it possible to bid her farewell.

Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, Dion's uncle, had questioned him about his nephew in a very mysterious manner as soon as he entered the council chamber, and received the reply that the wound in the shoulder, which Cæsarion had dealt with a short Roman sword, though severe, was—so the physicians assured them—not fatal.

This seemed to satisfy Zeno, and ere Gorgias could urge him to extend a protecting hand over his nephew, he excused himself and, with a message to the wounded man, turned his back upon him.

The courtier had not yet learned what view the Queen would take of this unfortunate affair, and besides, he was overloaded with business. The new enterprise required the issue of a large number of documents conferring authority, which all passed through his hands.

Cleopatra addressed a few kind, encouraging words to each one of the experts who had been entrusted with the execution of her plan. Gorgias,

too, was permitted to kiss her robe, which stirred his blood afresh. He would fain have flung himself at the feet of this marvellous woman and, with his services, place his life at her disposal. And Cleopatra noticed the enthusiastic ardour of his glance.

He, too, had been mentioned in the list of Barine's admirers. There must be something unusual about this woman! But could she have fired a body of grave men in behalf of a great, almost impossible deed, roused them to such enthusiastic admiration as she, the vanquished, menaced Queen? Certainly not.

She felt in the right mood to confront Barine as judge and rival.

In the midst of the deepest misery she had spent one happy hour. She had again felt, with joyous pride, that her intellect, fresh and unclouded, would be capable of outstripping the best powers, and in truth she needed no magic goblet to win hearts.

CHAPTER XII.

BARINE had been an hour in the palace. The magnificently furnished room to which she was conducted was directly above the council chamber, and sometimes, in the silence of the night, the voice of the Queen or the loud cheers of men were distinctly heard.

Barine listened without making the slightest effort to catch the meaning of the words which reached her ears. She longed only for something to divert her thoughts from the deep and bitter emotion which filled her soul. Ay, she was roused to fury, and yet she felt how completely this passionate resentment contradicted her whole nature.

True, the shameless conduct of Philostratus during their married life had often stirred the inmost depths of her placid, kindly spirit, and afterwards his brother Alexas had come to drive her, by his disgraceful proposals, to the verge of despair; rage was added to the passionate agitation of her soul, and for this she had cause to rejoice—but for this mighty resentment during the time of

struggle she might have, perhaps, succumbed from sheer weariness and the yearning desire to rest.

At last, at last, she and her friends, by means of great sacrifices, had succeeded in releasing her from these tortures. Philostratus's consent to liberate her was purchased. Alexas's persecution had ceased long before; he had first been sent away as envoy by his patron Antony, and afterwards been compelled to accompany him to the war.

How she had enjoyed the peaceful days in her mother's house! How quickly the bright cheerfulness which she had supposed lost had returned to her soul!—and to-day Fate had blessed her with the greatest happiness life had ever offered. True, she had had only a few brief hours in which to enjoy it, for the attack of the unbridled boys and the wound inflicted upon her lover had cast a heavy shadow on her bliss.

Her mother had again proved to be in the right when she so confidently predicted a second misfortune which would follow the first only too soon.

Barine had been torn at midnight from her peaceful home and her wounded lover's bedside. This was done by the Queen's command, and, full of angry excitement, she said to herself that the men were right who cursed tyranny because it transformed free human beings into characterless chattels.

There could be nothing good awaiting her; that was proved by the messengers whom Cleopatra

had sent to summon her at this unprecedented hour. They were her worst enemies: Iras, who desired to wed her lover—Dion had told her so after the assault—and Alexas, whose suit she had rejected in a way which a man never forgives.

She had already learned Iras's feelings. The slender figure with the narrow head, long, delicate nose, small chin, and pointed fingers, seemed to her like a long, sharp thorn. This strange comparison had entered her head as Iras stood rigidly erect, reading aloud in a shrill, high voice the Queen's command. Everything about this hard, cold face appeared as sharp as a sting, and ready to destroy her.

Her removal from her mother's house to the royal palace had been swift and simple.

After the attack—of which she saw little, because, overpowered by fear and horror, she closed her eyes—she had driven home with her lover, where the leech had bandaged his injuries, and Berenike had quickly and carefully transformed her own sleeping chamber into a sick-room.

Barine, after changing her dress, did not leave Dion's side. She had attired herself carefully, for she knew his delight in outward adornment. When she returned from her grandparents, before sunset, she was alone with him, and he, kissing her arm, had murmured that wherever the Greek tongue was spoken there was not one more beautiful. The gem was worthy of its loveliness. So she

had opened her baggage to take out the circlet which Antony had given, and it again enclasped her arm when she entered the sick-room.

Because Dion had told her that he deemed her fairest in the simple white robe she had worn a few days before, when there were no guests save himself and Gorgias, and she had sung until after midnight his favourite songs as though all were intended for him alone, her choice had fallen upon this garment. And she rejoiced that she had worn it—the wounded man's eyes rested upon her so joyously when she sat down opposite to him.

The physician had forbidden him to talk, and urged him to sleep if possible. So Barine only held his hand in silence, whispering, whenever he opened his eyes, a tender word of love and encouragement.

She had remained with him for hours, leaving her place at his side merely to give him his medicine, or, with her mother's aid, place poultices on his wounds.

When his manly face was distorted by suffering, she shared his pain; but during most of the time a calm, pleasant sense of happiness pervaded her mind. She felt safe and sheltered in the possession of the man whom she loved, though fully aware of the perils which threatened him, and, perhaps, her also. But the assurance of his love completely filled her heart and cast every care entirely into the shade. Many men had seemed estimable and

agreeable, a few even desirable husbands, but Dion was the first to awaken love in her ardent but by no means passionate soul. She regarded the experiences of the past few days as a beautiful miracle. How she had yearned and pined until the most fervent desire of her heart was fulfilled! Now Dion had offered her his love, and nothing could rob her of it.

Gorgias and the sons of her uncle Arius had disturbed her a short time. After they had gone with a good report, Berenike had entreated her daughter to lie down and let her take her place. But Barine would not leave her lover's couch, and had just loosed her hair to brush it again and fasten the thick, fair braids around her head, when, two hours after midnight, some one knocked loudly on the window shutters. Berenike was in the act of removing the poultice, so Barine herself went into the atrium to wake the doorkeeper.

But the old man was not asleep, and had anticipated her. She recognized, with a low cry of terror, the first person who entered the lighted vestibule—Alexas. Iras followed, her head closely muffled, for the storm was still howling through the streets. Last of all a lantern-bearer crossed the threshold.

The Syrian saluted the startled young beauty with a formal bow, but Iras, without a greeting or even a single word of preparation, delivered the Queen's command, and then read aloud, by the

light of the lantern, what Cleopatra had scrawled upon the wax tablet.

When Barine, pallid and scarcely able to control her emotion, requested the messengers who had arrived at so late an hour to enter, in order to give her time to prepare for the night drive and take leave of her mother, Iras vouchsafed no reply, but, as if she had the right to rule the house, merely ordered the doorkeeper to bring his mistress's cloak without delay.

While the old man, with trembling knees, moved away, Iras asked if the wounded Dion was in the dwelling; and Barine, her self-control restored by the question, answered, with repellent pride, that the Queen's orders did not command her to submit to an examination in her own house.

Iras shrugged her shoulders and said, sneeringly, to Alexas:

"In truth, I asked too much. One who attracts so many men of all ages can scarcely be expected to know the abode of each individual."

"The heart has a faithful memory," replied the Syrian in a tone of correction, but Iras echoed, contemptuously, "The heart!"

Then all were silent until, instead of the doorkeeper, Berenike herself came hurrying in, bringing the cloak. With pallid face and bloodless lips she wrapped it around her daughter's shoulders, whispering, amid floods of tears, almost inaudible words of love and encouragement, which Iras interrupted

by requesting Barine to follow her to the carriage.

The mother and daughter embraced and kissed each other, then the closed equipage bore the persecuted woman through the storm and darkness to Lochias.

Not a word was exchanged between Barine and the Queen's messengers until they reached the room where the former was to await Cleopatra; but here Iras again endeavoured to induce her to speak. At the first question, however, Barine answered that she had no information to give.

The room was as bright as if it were noonday, though the lights flickered constantly, for the wind found its way through the thin shutters closing the windows on both sides of the corner room, and a strong, cold draught swept in. Barine wrapped her cloak more closely around her; the storm which howled about the sea-washed palace harmonized with the vehement agitation of her soul. Whether she had looked within or without, there was nothing which could have soothed her save the assurance of being loved—an assurance that held fear at bay. Now, indignation prevented dread from overpowering her, yet calm consideration could not fail to show her that danger threatened on every hand. The very manner in which Iras and Alexas whispered together, without heeding her presence, boded peril, for courtiers show such contempt only to

those whom they know are threatened with the indifference or resentment of the sovereign.

Barine, during her married life with a man devoid of all delicacy of feeling, and with a disposition as evil as his tongue was ready, had learned to endure many things which were hard to bear; yet when, after a remark from Iras evidently concerning her, she heard Alexas laugh, she was compelled to exert the utmost self-restraint to avoid telling her enemy how utterly she despised the cowardly cruelty of her conduct. But she succeeded in keeping silent. Still, the painful constraint she imposed on herself must find vent in some way, and, as the tortured anguish of her soul reached its height, large tears rolled down her cheeks.

These, too, were noticed by her enemy and made the target of her wit; but this time the sarcasm failed to produce its effect upon the Syrian, for, instead of laughing, he grew grave, and whispered something which seemed to Barine a reproof or a warning. Iras's reply was merely a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.

Barine had noticed long before that her mother, in her fear and bewilderment, had brought her own cloak instead of her daughter's, and this circumstance also did not seem to her foe too trivial for a sneer.

But the childish insolence that seemed to have taken possession of one who usually by no means lacked dignity, was merely the mask beneath which

she concealed her own suffering. A grave motive was the source of the mirth by which she affected to be moved at the sight of her enemy's cloak. The grey, ill-fitting garment disfigured Barine, and she desired that the Queen should feel confident of surpassing her rival even in outward charms. No one, not even Cleopatra, could dispense with a protecting wrap in this cold draught, and nothing suited her better than the purple mantle in whose delicate woollen fabric black and gold dragons and griffins were embroidered. Iras had taken care that it lay ready. Barine could not fail to appear like a beggar in comparison, though Alexas said that her blue kerchief was marvellously becoming.

He was a base-minded voluptuary, who, aided by rich gifts of mind and wide knowledge, had shunned no means of ingratiating himself with Antony, the most lavish of patrons. The repulse which this man, accustomed to success, had received from Barine had been hard to forget, yet he did not resign the hope of winning her. Never had she seemed more desirable than in her touching weakness. Even base natures are averse to witnessing the torture of the defenceless, and when Iras had aimed another poisoned shaft at her, he ventured, at the risk of vexing his ally, to say, under his breath :

"Condemned criminals are usually granted, before their end, a favourite dish. I have no cause to wish Barine anything good; but I would not

grudge that. You, on the contrary, seem to delight in pouring wormwood on her last mouthful."

"Certainly," she answered, her eyes sparkling brightly. "Malice is the purest of pleasures; at least to me, when exercised on this woman."

The Syrian, with a strange smile, held out his hand, saying:

"Keep your good-will towards me, Iras."

"Because," she retorted with a sneer, "evil may follow my enmity. I think so, too. I am not especially sensitive concerning myself, but whoever dares"—here she raised her voice—"to harm one whom I— Just listen to the cheers! How she carries all hearts with her! Though Fate had made her a beggar, she would still be peerless among women. She is like the sun. The clouds which intrude upon her pathway of radiance are consumed and disappear."

While uttering the last sentence she had turned towards Barine, whose ear the sharp voice again pierced like a thorn, as she commanded her to prepare for the examination.

Almost at the same moment the door, caught by the wind, closed with a loud bang. The "introducer" * had opened it, and, after a hasty glance, exclaimed:

"The audience will not be given in this meeting-place for all the winds of heaven! Her Majesty

* Marshal of the court.

desires to receive her late visitor in the Hall of Shells."

With these words he bowed courteously to Barine, and ushered her and her two companions through several corridors and apartments into a well-heated anteroom.

Here even the windows were thoroughly protected from the storm. Several body-guards and pages belonging to the corps of the "royal boys" stood waiting to receive them.

"This is comfortable," said Alexas, turning to Iras. "Was the winter we have just experienced intended to fill us with twofold gratitude for the delights of the mild spring in this blessed room?"

"Perhaps so," she answered sullenly, and then added in a low tone: "Here at Lochias the seasons do not follow their usual course. They change according to the pleasure of the supreme will. Instead of four, the Egyptians, as you know, have but three; in the palaces on the Nile they are countless. What is the meaning of this sudden entry of summer? Winter would have pleased me better."

The Queen—Iras knew not why—had changed her arrangements for Barine's reception. This vexed her, and her features assumed a gloomy, threatening expression as the young beauty, casting aside her cloak and kerchief, stood awaiting Cleopatra in a white robe of fine material and perfect fit. The thick, fair braids, wound simply

around her shapely head, gave her an appearance of almost childish youth, and the sight made Iras feel as if she, and Cleopatra also, were outwitted.

In the dimly lighted atrium of the house near the Paneum garden, she had noticed only that Barine wore something white. Had it been merely a night robe, so much the better. But she might have appeared in her present garb at the festival of Isis. The most careful deliberation could have selected nothing more suitable or becoming. And did this vain woman go to rest with costly gold ornaments? Else how did the circlet chance to be on her arm? Each of Cleopatra's charms seemed to Iras, who knew them all, like a valuable possession of her own. To see even the least of them surpassed by another vexed her; and to behold in yonder woman a form which she could not deny was no less beautiful, enraged, nay, pierced her to the heart.

Since she had known that because of Barine she could hope for nothing more from the man to whose love she believed she possessed a claim dating from their childhood, she had hated the young beauty. And now to the many things which contributed to increase her hostile mood, was added the disagreeable consciousness that during the last few hours she had treated her contemptibly. Had she only seen earlier what her foe's cloak concealed, she would have found means to give her a different appearance. But she must

remain as she was; for Charmian had already entered. Other hours, however, would follow, and if the next did not decide the fate of the woman whom she hated, future ones should.

For this purpose she did not need the aid of Charmian, her uncle Archibius's sister, who had hitherto been a beloved associate and maternal friend. But what had happened? Iras fancied that her pleasant features wore a repellent expression which she had never seen before. Was this also the singer's fault? And what was the cause?

The older woman's manner decided the question whether she should still bestow upon her returned relative the love of a grateful niece. No, she would no longer put any restraint upon herself. Charmian should feel that she (Iras) considered any favour shown to her foe an insult. To work against her secretly was not in her nature. She had courage to show an enemy her aversion, and she did not fear Charmian enough to pursue a different course. She knew that the artist Leonax, Barine's father, had been Charmian's lover; but this did not justify her favouring the woman who had robbed her niece of the heart of the man whom she—as Charmian knew—had loved from childhood.

Charmian had just had a long conversation with her brother, and had also learned in the palace that Barine had been summoned to the Queen's

presence in the middle of the night; so, firmly persuaded that evil was intended to the young woman who had already passed through so many agitating scenes of joy and sorrow, she entered the waiting-room, and her pleasant though no longer youthful face, framed in smooth, grey hair, was greeted by Barine as the shipwrecked mariner hails the sight of land.

All the emotions which had darkened and embittered her soul were soothed. She hastened towards her friend's sister, as a frightened child seeks its mother, and Charmian perceived what was stirring in her heart.

It would not do, under existing circumstances, to kiss her in the palace, but she drew Leonax's daughter towards her to show Iras that she was ready to extend a protecting hand over the persecuted woman. But Barine gazed at her with pleading glances, beseeching aid, whispering amid her tears: "Help me, Charmian. She has tortured, insulted, humiliated me with looks and words—so cruelly, so spitefully! Help me; I can bear no more."

Charmian shook her kind head and urged her in a whisper to calm herself. She had robbed Iras of her lover; she should remember that. Cost what it might, she must not shed another tear. The Queen was gracious. She, Charmian, would aid her. Everything would depend on showing herself to Cleopatra as she was, not as slander

represented her. She must answer her as she would Archibius or herself.

The kindly woman, as she spoke, stroked her brow and eyes with maternal tenderness, and Barine felt as if goodness itself had quelled the tempest in her soul. She gazed around her as though roused from a troubled dream, and now for the first time perceived the richly adorned room in which she stood, the admiring glances of the boys in the Macedonian corps of pages, and the bright fire blazing cheerily on the hearth. The howling of the storm increased the pleasant sense of being under a firm roof, and Iras, who had whispered to the "introducer" at the door, no longer seemed like a sharp thorn or a spiteful demon, but a woman by no means destitute of charm, who repulsed her, but on whom she had inflicted the keenest pang a woman's heart can suffer. Then she again thought of her wounded lover at home, and remembered that, whatever might happen, his heart did not belong to Iras, but to her alone. Lastly, she recalled Archibius's description of Cleopatra's childhood, and this remembrance was followed by the conviction that the omnipotent sovereign would be neither cruel nor unjust, and that it would depend upon herself to win her favour. Charmian, too, was the Queen's confidante; and if the manner of Iras and Alexas had alarmed her, Charmian's might well inspire confidence.

All these thoughts darted through her brain

with the speed of lightning. Only a brief time for consideration remained; for, even as she bowed her head on the bosom of her friend, the "introducer" entered the room, crying, "Her illustrious Majesty will expect those whom she summoned in a few minutes!"

Soon after a chamberlain appeared, waving a fan of ostrich feathers and, preceded by the court official, they passed through several brilliantly lighted, richly furnished rooms.

Barine again breathed freely and moved with head erect; and when the wide, lofty folding doors of ebony, against whose deep black surface the inlaid figures of Tritons, mermaids, shells, fish, and sea monsters were sharply relieved, she beheld a glittering, magnificent scene, for the hall which Cleopatra had chosen for her reception was completely covered with various marine forms, from the shells to coral and starfish.

A wide, lofty structure, composed of masses of stalactites and unhewn blocks of stone, formed a deep grotto at the end of the hall, whence peered the gigantic head of a monster whose open jaws formed the fireplace of the chimney. Logs of fragrant Arabian wood were blazing brightly on the hearth, and the dragon's ruby glass eyes diffused a red light through the apartment which, blended with the rays of the white and pink lamps in the shape of lotus flowers fastened among gold and silver tendrils and groups of sedges on the walls

and ceiling, filling the spacious apartment with the soft light whose roseate hue was specially becoming to Cleopatra's waxen complexion.

Several stewards and cup-bearers, the master of the hunt, chamberlains, female attendants, eunuchs, and other court officials were awaiting the Queen, and pages who belonged to the Macedonian cadet corps of royal boys stood sleepily, with drooping heads, around the small throne of gold, coral, and amber which, placed opposite to the chimney, awaited the sovereign.

Barine had already seen this magnificent hall, and others still more beautiful in the Sebasteum, and the splendour therefore neither excited nor abashed her; only she would fain have avoided the numerous train of courtiers. Could it be Cleopatra's intention to question her before the eyes of all these men, women, and boys?

She no longer felt afraid, but her heart still throbbed quickly. It had beat in the same way in her girlhood, when she was asked to sing in the presence of strangers.

At last she heard doors open, and an invisible hand parted the heavy curtains at her right. She expected to see the Regent, the Keeper of the Seal, and the whole brilliantly adorned train of attendants who always surrounded the Queen on formal occasions, enter the magnificent hall. Else why had it been selected as the scene of this nocturnal trial?

But what was this?

While she was still recalling the display at the Adonis festival, the curtains began to close again. The courtiers around the throne straightened their bowed figures, the pages forgot their fatigue, and all joined in the Greek salutation of welcome, and the "Life! happiness! health!" with which the Egyptians greeted their sovereign.

The woman of middle height who now appeared before the curtain, and who, as she crossed the wide hall alone and unattended, seemed to Barine even smaller than when surrounded by the gay throng at the Adonis festival, must be the Queen.

Ay, it was she!

Iras was already standing by her side, and Charmian was approaching with the "introducer." The women rendered her various little services: thus Iras took from her shoulders the purple mantle, with its embroidery of black and gold dragons. What an exquisite masterpiece of the loom it must be!

All the dangers against which she must defend herself flashed swiftly through Barine's mind; yet, for an instant, she felt the foolish feminine desire to see and handle the costly mantle.

But Iras had already laid it on the arm of one of the waiting maids, and Cleopatra now glanced around her, and with a youthful, elastic step approached the throne.

Once more the feeling of timidity which she

had had in her girlhood overpowered Barine, but with it came the memory of the garden of Epicurus, and Archibius's assurance that she, too, would have left the Queen with her heart overflowing with warm enthusiasm had not a disturbing influence interposed between them.

Yet, had this disturbing influence really existed?

No. It was created solely by Cleopatra's jealous imagination. If she would only permit her to speak freely now, she should hear that Antony cared as little for her as she, Barine, for the boy Cæsarion. What prevented her from confessing that her heart was another's? Iras had no one to blame save herself if she spoke the truth pitilessly in her presence.

Cleopatra now turned to the "introducer," waving her hand towards the throne and those who surrounded it.

Ay, she was indeed beautiful. How bright and clear was the light of her large eyes, in spite of the harassing days through which she had passed and the present night of watching!

Cleopatra's heart was still elated by the reception of her bold idea of escape, and she approached Barine with gentler feelings and intentions. She had chosen a pleasanter room for the interview than the one Iras had selected. She desired a special environment to suit each mood, and as soon as she saw the group of courtiers who surrounded the throne she ordered their dismissal.

The "introducer," to carry out the usual ceremonial, had commanded their presence in the audience chamber, but their attendance had given the meeting a form which was now distasteful to the Queen. She wished to question, not to condemn.

At so happy an hour it was a necessity of her nature to be gracious. Perhaps she had been unduly anxious concerning this singer. It even seemed probable; for a man who loved her like Antony could scarcely yearn for the favour of another woman. This view had been freshly confirmed by a brief conversation with the chief Inspector of Sacrifices, an estimable old man, who, after hearing how Antony had hurried in pursuit of her at Actium, raised his eyes and hands as if transported with rapture, exclaiming: "Unhappy Queen! Yet happiest of women! No one was ever so ardently beloved; and when the tale is told of the noble Trojan who endured such sore sufferings for a woman's sake, future generations will laud the woman whose resistless spell constrained the greatest man of his day, the hero of heroes, to cast aside victory, fame, and the hope of the world's sovereignty, as mere worthless rubbish."

Posterity, whose verdict she dreaded—this wise old reader of the future was right—must extol her as the most fervently beloved, the most desirable of women.

And Mark Antony? Even had the magic power of Nektanebus's goblet forced him to follow her and to leave the battle, there still remained his will, a copy of which—received from Rome—Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, had showed to her at the close of the council. "Wherever he might die," so ran the words, "he desired to be buried by the side of Cleopatra." Octavianus had wrested it from the Vestal Virgins, to whose care it had been entrusted, in order to fill the hearts of Roman citizens and matrons with indignation against his foe. The plot had succeeded, but the document had reminded Cleopatra that her heart had given this man the first of its flowers, that love for him had been the sunshine of her life. So, with head erect, she had crossed the threshold where she was to meet the woman who had ventured to sow tares in her garden. She intended to devote only a short time to the interview, which she anticipated with the satisfaction of the strong who are confident of victory.

As she approached the throne, her train left the hall; the only persons who remained were Charmian, Iras, Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, and the "introducer."

Cleopatra cast a rapid glance at the throne, to which an obsequious gesture of the courtier's hand invited her; but she remained standing, gazing keenly at Barine.

Was it the coloured rays from the ruby eyes of the dragon in the fireplace which shed the

roseate glow on Cleopatra's cheeks? It certainly enhanced the beauty of a face now only too frequently pallid and colourless, when rouge did not lend its aid; but Barine understood Archibius's ardent admiration for this rare woman, when Cleopatra, with a faint smile, requested her to approach.

Nothing more winning could be imagined than the frank kindness, wholly untinged by condescending pride, of this powerful sovereign.

The less Barine had expected such a reception the more deeply it moved her; nay, her eyes grew dim with grateful emotion, which lent them so beautiful a lustre, she looked so lovely in her glad surprise, that Cleopatra thought the months which had elapsed since her first meeting with the singer had enhanced her charms. And how young she was! The Queen swiftly computed the years which Barine must have lived as the wife of Philostratus, and afterwards as the attractive mistress of a hospitable house, and found it difficult to reconcile the appearance of this blooming young creature with the result of the calculation.

She was surprised, too, to note the aristocratic bearing whose possession no one could deny the artist's daughter. This was apparent even in her dress, yet Iras had roused her in the middle of the night, and certainly had given her no time for personal adornment.

She had expected lack of refinement and boldness, in the woman who was said to have attracted so many men, but even the most bitter prejudice could have detected no trace of it. On the contrary, the embarrassment which she could not yet wholly subdue lent her an air of girlish timidity. All in all, Barine was a charming creature, who bewitched men by her vivacity, her grace, and her exquisite voice, not by coquetry and pertness. That she possessed unusual mental endowments Cleopatra did not believe. Barine had only one advantage over her—youth.

Time had not yet robbed the former of a single charm, while from the Queen he had wrested many; their number was known only to herself and her confidantes, but at this hour she did not miss them.

Barine, with a low, modest bow, advanced towards the Queen, who commenced the conversation by graciously apologizing for the late hour at which she had summoned her. "But," she added, "you belong to the ranks of the nightingales, who during the night most readily and exquisitely reveal to us what stirs their hearts——"

Barine gazed silently at the floor a moment, and when she raised her eyes her voice was faint and timid. "I sing, it is true, your Majesty, but I have nothing else in common with the birds. The wings which, when a child, bore me wherever I desired, have lost their strength. They do not

wholly refuse their service, but they now require favourable hours to move."

"I should not have expected that in the time of your youth, your most beautiful possession," replied the Queen. "Yet it is well. I too—how long ago it seems!—was a child, and my imagination outstripped even the flight of the eagle. It could dare the risk unpunished. Now—— Whoever has reached mature life is wise to let these wings remain idle. The mortal who ventures to use them may easily approach too near the sun, and, like Icarus, the wax will melt from his pinions. Let me tell you this: To the child the gift of imagination is nourishing bread. In later years we need it only as salt, as spice, as stimulating wine. Doubtless it points out many paths, and shows us their end; but, of a hundred rambles to which it summons him, scarcely one pleases the mature man. No troublesome parasite is more persistently and sharply rebuffed. Who can blame the ill-treated friend if it is less ready to serve us as the years go on? The wise man will keep his ears ever open, but rarely lend it his active hand. To banish it from life is to deprive the plant of blossoms, the rose of its fragrance, the sky of its stars."

"I have often said the same things to myself, though in a less clear and beautiful form, when life has been darkened," replied Barine, with a faint blush; for she felt that these words were

doubtless intended to warn her against cherishing too aspiring wishes. "But, your Majesty, here also the gods place you, the great Queen, far above us. We should often find existence bare indeed but for the fancy which endows us with imaginary possessions. You have the power to secure a thousand things which to us common mortals only the gift of imagination pictures as attainable."

"You believe that happiness is like wealth, and that the happiest person is the one who receives the largest number of the gifts of fortune," answered the Queen. "The contrary, I think, can be easily proved. The maxim that the more we have the less we need desire, is also false, though in this world there are only a certain number of desirable things. He who already possesses one of ten solidi which are to be divided, ought really to desire only nine, and therefore would be poorer by a wish than another who has none. True, it cannot be denied that the gods have burdened or endowed me with a greater number of perishable gifts than you and many others. You seem to set a high value upon them. Doubtless there may be one or another which you could appropriate only by the aid of the imagination. May I ask which seems to you the most desirable?"

"Spare me the choice, I beseech you," replied Barine in an embarrassed tone. "I need nothing from your treasures, and, as for the other posses-

sions—— I lack many things; but it is uncertain how the noblest and highest gifts in the possession of the marvellously endowed favourite of the gods would suit the small, commonplace ones I call mine, and I know not——"

"A sensible doubt!" interrupted the Queen. "The lame man, who desired a horse, obtained one, and on his first ride broke his neck. The only blessing—the highest of all—which surely bestows happiness can neither be given away nor transferred from one to another. He who has gained it may be robbed of it the next moment."

The last sentence had fallen from the Queen's lips slowly and thoughtfully, but Barine, remembering Archibius's tale, said modestly, "You are thinking of the chief good mentioned by Epicurus —perfect peace of mind."

Cleopatra's eyes sparkled with a brighter light as she asked eagerly, "Do you, the granddaughter of a philosopher, know the system of the master?"

"Very superficially, your Majesty. My intellect is far inferior to yours. It is difficult for me thoroughly to comprehend all the details of any system of philosophy."

"Yet you have attempted it?"

"Others endeavoured to introduce me into the doctrines of the Stoics. I have forgotten most of what I learned; only one thing lingered in my memory, and I know why—because it pleased me."

"And *that?*"

"Was the wise law of living according to the dictates of our own natures. The command to shun everything contradictory to the simple fundamental traits of our own characters pleased me, and wherever I saw affectation, artificiality, and mannerism I was repelled, while from my grandfather's teaching I drew the principle that I could do nothing better than to remain, so far as life would permit, what I had been as a child ere I had heard the first word of philosophy, or felt the constraint which society and its forms impose."

"So the system of the Stoics leads to this end also!" cried the Queen gaily, and, turning to the companion of her own studies, she added: "Did you hear, Charmian? If we had only succeeded in perceiving the wisdom and calm, purposeful order of existence which the Stoics, amid so much that is perverse, unhealthy, and provocative of contradiction, nevertheless set above everything else! How can I, in order to live wisely, imitate Nature, when in her being and action I encounter so much that is contradictory to my human reason, which is a part of the divine?"

Here she hesitated, and the expression of her face suddenly changed.

She had advanced close to Barine and, while standing directly in front of her, her eyes had rested on the gem which adorned her arm above the elbow.

Was it this which agitated Cleopatra so violently

that her voice lost its bewitching melody, as she went on in a harsh, angry tone?—"So that is the source of all this misfortune. Even as a child I detested that sort of arbitrary judgment which passes under the mask of stern morality. There is an example! Do you hear the howling of the storm? In human nature, as well as in the material world, there are tempests and volcanoes which bring destruction, and, if the original character of any individual is full of such devastating forces, like the neighbourhood of Vesuvius or Etna, the goal to which his impulses would lead him is clearly visible. Ay, the Stoic is not allowed to destroy the harmony and order of things in existence, any more than to disturb those which are established by the state. But to follow our natural impulses wherever they lead us is so perilous a venture, that whoever has the power to fix a limit to it betimes is in duty bound to do so. This power is mine, and I will use it!"

Then, with iron severity, she asked: "As it seems to be one of the demands of your nature, woman, to allure and kindle the hearts of all who bear the name of man, even though they have not yet donned the garb of the Ephebi, so, too, you seem to appear to delight in idle ornaments. Or"—and as she spoke she touched Barine's shoulder—"or why should you wear, during the hours of slumber, that circlet on your arm?"

Barine had watched with increasing anxiety the

marked change in the manner and language of the Queen. She now beheld a repetition of what she had experienced at the Adonis festival, but this time she knew what had roused Cleopatra's jealousy. She, Barine, wore on her arm a gift from Antony. With pallid face she strove to find a fitting answer, but ere she could do so Iras advanced to the side of the incensed Queen, saying: "That circlet is the counterpart of the one your august husband bestowed upon you. The singer's must also be a gift from Mark Antony. Like every one else in the world, she deems the noble Imperator the greatest man of his day. Who can blame her for prizing it so highly that she does not remove it even while she sleeps?"

Again Barine felt as if a thorn had pierced her; but though the resentment which she had previously experienced once more surged hotly within her heart, she forced herself to maintain seemly external composure, and struggled for some word in answer; but she found none suitable, and remained silent.

She had told the truth. From early youth she had followed the impulses of her own nature without heeding the opinion of mortals, as the teachings of the Stoics directed, and she had been allowed to do so because this nature was pure, truthful, alive to the beautiful, and, moreover, free from those unbridled, volcanic impulses to which the Queen alluded. The cheerful patience of her soul

had found ample satisfaction in the cultivation of her art, and in social intercourse with men who permitted her to share their own intellectual life. To-day she had learned that the first great passion of her heart had met with a response. Now she was bound to her lover, and knew herself to be pure and guiltless, far better entitled to demand respect from sterner judges of morality than the woman who condemned her, or the spiteful Iras, who had not ceased to offer her love to Dion.

The sorrowful feeling of being misunderstood and unjustly condemned, mingled with fear of the terrible fate to which she might be sentenced by the omnipotent sovereign, whose clear intellect was clouded by jealousy and the resentment of a mother's wounded heart, paralyzed her tongue. Besides, she was confused by the angry emotion which the sight of Iras awakened. Twice, thrice she strove to utter a few words of explanation, defence, but her voice refused to obey her will.

When Charmian at last approached to encourage her, it was too late; the indignant Queen had turned away, exclaiming to Iras: "Let her be taken back to Lochias. Her guilt is proved; but it does not become the injured person, the accuser, to award the punishment. This must be left to the judges before whom we will bring her."

Then Barine once more recovered the power of speech. How dared Cleopatra assert that she was convicted of a crime, without hearing her defence?

As surely as she felt her own innocence she must succeed in proving it, and with this consciousness she cried out to the Queen in a tone of touching entreaty: "O your Majesty, do not leave me without hearing me! As truly as I believe in your justice, I can ask you to listen to me once more. Do not give me up to the woman who hates me because the man whom she——"

Here Cleopatra interrupted her. Royal dignity forbade her to hear one woman's jealous accusation of another, but, with the subtle discernment with which women penetrate one another's moods, she heard in Barine's piteous appeal a sincere conviction that she was too severely condemned. Doubtless she also had reason to believe in Iras's hate, and Cleopatra knew how mercilessly she pursued those who had incurred her displeasure. She had rejected and still shuddered at her advice to remove the singer from her path; for an inner voice warned her not to burden her soul now with a fresh crime, which would disturb its peace. Besides, she had at first been much attracted by this charming, winning creature; but the irritating thought that Antony had bestowed the same gift upon the sovereign and the artist's daughter still so incensed her, that it taxed to the utmost her graciousness and self-control as, without addressing any special person, she exclaimed, glancing back into the hall: "This examination will be followed by another. When the time comes, the accused must appear before the

judges; therefore she must remain at Lochias and in custody. It is my will that no harm befalls her. —You are her friend, Charmian. I will place her in your charge. Only "—here she raised her voice— "on pain of my anger, do not allow her by any possibility to leave the palace, even for a moment, or to hold intercourse with any person save yourself."

With these words she passed out of the hall and went into her own apartments. She had turned the night into day, not only to despatch speedily matters which seemed to her to permit of no delay, but even more because, since the battle of Actium, she dreaded the restless hours upon her lonely couch. They seemed endless; and though before she had remembered with pleasure the unprecedented display and magnificence with which she had surrounded her love-life with Antony, she now in these hours reproached herself for having foolishly squandered the wealth of her people. The present appeared unbearable, and from the future a host of black cares pressed upon her.

The following days were overcrowded with business details.

Half of her nights were spent in the observatory. She had not asked again for Barine. On the fifth night she permitted Alexas to conduct her once more to the little observatory which had been erected for her father at Lochias, and Antony's favourite knew how to prove that a star which had

long threatened her planet was that of the woman whom she seemed to have forgotten as completely as she had ignored his former warning against this very foe.

The Queen denied this, but Alexas eagerly continued: "The night after your return home your kindness was again displayed in its inexhaustible and—to us less noble souls—incomprehensible wealth. Deeply agitated, we watched during the memorable examination the touching spectacle of the greatest heart making itself the standard by which to measure what is petty and ignoble. But ere the second trial takes place the wanderers above, who know the future, bid me warn you once more; for that woman's every look was calculated, every word had its fixed purpose, every tone of her voice was intended to produce a certain effect. Whatever she said or may yet say had no other design than to deceive my royal mistress. As yet there have been no definite questions and answers. But you will have her examined, and then—— What may she not make of the story of Mark Antony, Barine, and the two armlets? Perhaps it will be a masterpiece."

"Do you know its real history?" asked Cleopatra, clasping her fingers more closely around the pencil in her hand.

"If I did," replied Alexas, smiling significantly, "the receiver of stolen goods should not betray the thief."

"Not even if the person who has been robbed—the Queen—commands you to give up the dishonestly acquired possession?"

"Unfortunately, even then I should be forced to withhold obedience; for consider, my royal mistress, there are but two great luminaries around which my dark life revolves. Shall I betray the moon, when I am sure of gaining nothing thereby save to dim the warm light of the sun?"

"That means that your revelations would wound me, the sun?"

"Unless your lofty soul is too great to be reached by shadows which surround less noble women with an atmosphere of indescribable torture."

"Do you intend to render your words more attractive by the veil with which you shroud them? It is transparent, and dims the vision very little. My soul, you think, should be free from jealousy and the other weaknesses of my sex. There you are mistaken. I am a woman, and wish to remain one. As Terence's Chremes says he is a human being, and nothing human is unknown to him, I do not hesitate to confess all feminine frailties. Anubis told me of a queen in ancient times who would not permit the inscriptions to record 'she,' but 'he came,' or 'he, the ruler, conquered.' Fool! Whatever concerns me, my womanhood is not less lofty than the crown. I was a woman ere I became Queen. The people prostrate themselves before my

empty litters; but when, in my youth, I wandered in disguise with Antony through the city streets and visited some scene of merrymaking, while the men gazed admiringly at me, and we heard voices behind us murmur, 'A handsome couple!' I returned home full of joy and pride. But there was something greater still for the woman to learn, when the heart in the breast of the Queen forgot throne and sceptre and, in the hours consecrated to Eros, tasted joys known to womanhood alone. How can you men, who only command and desire, understand the happiness of sacrifice? I am a woman; my birth does not exalt me above any feeling of my sex; and what I now ask is not as Queen but as woman."

"If that is the case," Alexas answered with his hand upon his heart, "you impose silence upon me; for were I to confess to the woman Cleopatra what agitates my soul, I should be guilty of a double crime—I would violate a promise and betray the friend who confided his noble wife to my protection."

"Now the darkness is becoming too dense for me," replied Cleopatra, raising her head with repellent pride. "Or, if I choose to raise the veil, I must point out to you the barriers——"

"Which surround the Queen," replied the Syrian with an obsequious bow. "There you behold the fact. It is an impossibility to separate the woman from the princess. So far as I am concerned, I do

not wish to anger the former against the presumptuous adorer, and I desire to yield to the latter the obedience which is her due. Therefore I entreat you to forget the armlet and its many painful associations, and pass to the consideration of other matters. Perhaps the fair Barine will voluntarily confess everything, and even add how she managed to ensnare the amiable son of the greatest of men, and the most admirable of mothers, the young King Cæsarion."

Cleopatra's eyes flashed more brightly, and she angrily exclaimed: "I found the boy just now as though he were possessed by demons. He was ready to tear the bandage from his wound, if he were refused the woman whom he loved. A magic potion was the first thought, and his tutor of course attributes everything to magic arts. Charmian, on the contrary, declares that his visits annoyed and even alarmed Barine. Nothing except a rigid investigation can throw light upon this subject. We will await the Imperator's return. Do you think that he will again seek the singer? You are his most trusted confidant. If you desire his best good, and care for my favour, drop your hesitation and answer this question."

The Syrian assumed the manner of a man who had reached a decision, and answered firmly: "Certainly he will, unless you prevent him. The simplest way would be——"

"Well?"

"To inform him, as soon as he lands, that she is no longer to be found. I should be especially happy to receive this commission from my royal sun."

"And do you think it would dim the light of your moon a little, were he to seek her here in vain?"

"As surely as that the contrary would be the case if he were always as gratefully aware of the peerless brilliancy of his sun as it deserves. Helios suffers no other orb to appear so long as he adorns the heavens. His lustre quenches all the rest. Let my sun so decree, and Barine's little star will vanish."

"Enough! I know your aim now. But a human life is no small thing, and this woman, too, is the child of a mother. We must consider, earnestly consider, whether our purpose cannot be gained without proceeding to extremes. This must be done with zeal and a kindly intention—— But I—— Now, when the fate of this country, my own, and the children's is hanging in the balance, when I have not fifteen minutes at my command, and there is no end of writing and consulting, I can waste no time on such matters."

"The reflective mind must be permitted to use its mighty wings unimpeded," cried the Syrian eagerly. "Leave the settlement of minor matters to trustworthy friends."

Here they were interrupted by the "introducer," who announced the eunuch Mardion. He

had come on business which, spite of the late hour, permitted no delay.

Alexas accompanied the Queen to the tablinum, where they found the eunuch. A slave attended him, carrying a pouch filled with letters which had just been brought by two messengers from Syria. Among them were some which must be answered without delay. The Keeper of the Seal and the Exegetus were also waiting. Their late visit was due to the necessity of holding a conference in relation to the measures to be adopted to calm the excited citizens. All the galleys which had escaped from the battle had entered the harbour the day before, wreathed with garlands as if a great victory had been won. Loud acclamations greeted them, yet tidings of the defeat at Actium spread with the swiftness of the wind. Crowds were now gathering, threatening demonstrations had been made in front of the Sebasteum, and on the square of the Serapeum the troops had been compelled to interfere, and blood had flowed.

There lay the letters. Zeno remarked that more papers conferring authority were required for the work on the canal, and the Exegetus earnestly besought definite instruction.

"It is much—much," murmured Cleopatra. Then, drawing herself up to her full height, she exclaimed, "Well, then, to work!"

But Alexas did not permit her to do this at once. Humbly advancing as she took her seat at the large

writing-table, he whispered: "And with all this, must my royal mistress devote time and thought to the destroyer of her peace. To disturb your Majesty with this trifle is a crime; yet it must be committed, for should the affair remain unheeded longer, the trickling rivulet may become a mountain torrent——"

Here Cleopatra, whose glance had just rested upon a fateful letter from King Herod, turned her face half towards her husband's favourite, exclaiming curtly, with glowing cheeks, "Presently."

Then she glanced rapidly over the letter, pushed it excitedly aside, and dismissed the waiting Syrian with the impatient words: "Attend to the trial and the rest. No injustice, but no untimely mildness. I will look into this unpleasant matter myself before the Imperator returns."

"And the authority?" asked the Syrian, with another low bow.

"You have it. If you need a written one, apply to Zeno. We will discuss the affair further at some less busy hour."

The Syrian retired; but Cleopatra turned to the eunuch and, flushed with emotion, cried, pointing to the King of Judea's letter: "Did you ever witness baser ingratitude? The rats think the ship is sinking, and it is time to leave it. If we succeed in keeping above water, they will return in swarms; and this must, must, *must* be done, for the sake of this beloved country and her independence. Then

the children, the children! All our powers must now be taxed, every expedient must be remembered and used. We will hammer each feeble hope until it becomes the strong steel of certainty. We will transform night into day. The canal will save the fleet. Mark Antony will find in Africa Pinarius Scarpus with untouched loyal legions. The gladiators are faithful to us. We can easily make them ours, and my brain is seething with other plans. But first we will attend to the Alexandrians. No violence!"

This exclamation was followed by order after order, and the promise that, if necessary, she would show herself to the people.

The Exegetus was filled with admiration as he received the clear, sagacious directions. After he had retired with his companions, the Queen again turned to the Regent, saying: "We did wisely to make the people happy at first with tidings of victory. The unexpected news of terrible disaster might have led them to some unprecedented deed of madness. Disappointment is a more common pain, for which less powerful remedies will suffice. Besides, many things could be arranged ere they knew that I was here. How much we have accomplished already, Mardion! But I have not even granted myself the joy of seeing my children. I was forced to defer the pleasure of the companionship of my oldest friends, even Archibius. When he comes again he will be admitted. I have given

the order. He knows Rome thoroughly. I must hear his opinion of pending negotiations."

She shivered as she spoke, and pressing her hand upon her brow, exclaimed: "Octavianus victor, Cleopatra vanquished! I, who was everything to Cæsar, beseeching mercy from his heir. I, a petitioner to Octavia's brother! Yet, no, no! There are still a hundred chances of avoiding the horrible doom. But whoever wishes to compel the field to bear fruits must dig sturdily, draw the buckets from the well, plough, and sow the seed. To work, then, to work! When Antony returns he must find all things ready. The first success will restore his lost energy. I glanced through yonder letter while talking with the Exegetus; now I will dictate the answer."

So she sat reading, writing, and dictating, listening, answering, and giving orders, until the east brightened with the approach of dawn, the morning star grew pale, and the Regent, utterly exhausted, entreated her to consider her own health and his years, and permit him a few hours' rest.

Then she, too, allowed herself to be led into her darkened chamber, and this time a friendly, dreamless slumber closed her weary eyes and held her captive until roused by the loud shouts of the multitude, who had heard of the Queen's return and flocked to Lochias.

END OF VOLUME I.

GEORG EBERS

CLEOPATRA

THE HISTORICAL ROMANCES OF
GEORG EBERS

CLEOPATRA

VOLUME TWO

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CLEOPATRA.

CHAPTER XIII.

During these hours of rest Iras and Charmian had watched in turn beside Cleopatra. When she rose, the younger attendant rendered her the necessary services. She was to devote herself to her mistress until the evening; for her companion, who now stood in her way, was not to return earlier. Before Charmian left, she had seen that her apartments—in which Barine, since the Queen had placed her in her charge, had been a welcome guest—were carefully watched. The commander of the Macedonian guard, who years before had vainly sought her favour, and finally had become the most loyal of her friends, had promised to keep them closely.

Yet Iras knew how to profit by her mistress's sleep and the absence of her aunt. She had learned that she would be shut out of her apartments, and therefore from Barine also. Ere any step could be taken against the prisoner, she must first arrange

the necessary preliminaries with Alexas. The failure of her expectation of seeing her rival trampled in the dust had transformed her jealous resentment into hatred, and though she was her niece, she even transferred a portion of it to Charmian, who had placed herself between her and her victim.

She had sent for the Syrian, but he, too, had gone to rest at a late hour and kept her waiting a long time. The reception which the impatient girl bestowed was therefore by no means cordial, but her manner soon grew more friendly.

First Alexas boasted of having induced the Queen to commit Barine's fate to him. If he should try her at noon and find her guilty, there was nothing to prevent him from compelling her to drink the poisoned cup or having her strangled before evening. But the matter would be dangerous, because the singer's friends were numerous and by no means powerless. Yet, in the depths of her heart, Cleopatra desired nothing more ardently than to rid herself of her dangerous rival. But he knew the great ones of the earth. If he acted energetically and brought matters to a speedy close, the Queen, to avoid evil gossip, would burden him with her own act. Antony's mood could not be predicted, and the Syrian's weal or woe depended on his favour. Besides, the execution of the singer at the last Adonis festival might have a dangerous effect upon the people of Alexandria. They were already greatly excited, and his brother,

who knew them, said that some were overwhelmed with sorrow, and others ready, in their fury, to rise in a bloody rebellion. Everything was to be feared from this rabble, but Philostratus understood how to persuade them to many things, and Alexas had just secured his aid.

Alexas had really succeeded in the work of reconciliation. During the orator's married life with Barine she had forbidden her brother-in-law the house, and her husband had quarrelled with the brother who sought his wife. But after the latter had risen to a high place in Antony's favour, and been loaded with gold by his lavish hand, Philostratus had again approached him to claim his share of the new wealth. And the source from which Alexas drew flowed so abundantly that his favourite did not find it difficult to give. Both men were as unprincipled as they were lavish, and experience taught them that base natures always have at their disposal a plank with which to bridge chasms. If it is of gold, it will be crossed the more speedily. Such was the case here, and of late it had become specially firm; for each needed the other's aid.

Alexas loved Barine, while Philostratus no longer cared for her. On the other hand, he hated Dion with so ardent a thirst for revenge that, to obtain it, he would have resigned even the hope of fresh gains. The humiliation inflicted upon him by the arrogant Macedonian noble, and the derision

which through his efforts had been heaped upon him, haunted him like importunate pursuers; and he felt that he could only rid himself of them with the source of his disgrace. Without his brother's aid, he would have been content to assail Dion with his slandering tongue; with his powerful assistance he could inflict a heavier injury upon him, perhaps even rob him of liberty and life. They had just made an agreement by which Philostratus pledged himself to reconcile the populace to any punishment that might be inflicted upon Barine, and Alexas promised to help his brother take a bloody vengeance upon Dion the Macedonian.

Barine's death could be of no service to Alexas. The sight of her beauty had fired his heart a second time, and he was resolved to make her his own. In the dungeon, perhaps by torture, she should be forced to grasp his helping hand. All this would permit no delay. Everything must be done before the return of Antony, who was daily expected. Alexas's lavish patron had made him so rich that he could bear to lose his favour for the sake of this object. Even without it, he could maintain a household with royal magnificence in some city of his Syrian home.

On receiving the favourite's assurance that he would remove Barine from Charmian's protection on the morrow, Iras became more gracious. She could make no serious objection to his statement that the new trial might not, it is true, end in a

sentence of death, but the verdict would probably be transportation to the mines, or something of the sort.

Then Alexas cautiously tested Iras's feelings towards his brother's mortal foe. They were hostile; yet when the favourite intimated that he, too, ought to be given up to justice, she showed so much hesitation, that Alexas stopped abruptly and turned the conversation upon Barine. Here she promised assistance with her former eager zeal, and it was settled that the arrest should be made the following morning during the hours of Charmian's attendance upon the Queen.

Iras had valuable counsel to offer. She was familiar with one of the prisons, whose doors she had opened to many a hapless mortal whose disappearance, in her opinion, might be of service to the Queen. She had deemed it a duty, aided by the Keeper of the Seal, to anticipate her mistress in cases where her kind heart would have found it difficult to pronounce a severe sentence, and Cleopatra had permitted it, though without commendation or praise. What happened within its walls—thanks to the silence of the warder—never passed beyond the portals. If Barine cursed her life there, she would still fare better than she, Iras, who during the past few nights had been on the brink of despair whenever she thought of the man who had disdained her love and abandoned her for another.

As the Syrian held out his hand to take leave, she asked bluntly:

"And Dion?"

"He cannot be set free," was the reply, "for he loves Barine; nay, the fool was on the eve of leading her home to his beautiful palace as its mistress."

"Is that true, really true?" asked Iras, whose cheeks and lips lost every tinge of colour, though she succeeded in maintaining her composure.

"He confessed it yesterday in a letter to his uncle, the Keeper of the Seal, in which he entreated him to do his utmost for his chosen bride, whom he would never resign. But Zeno has no liking for this niece. Do you wish to see the letter?"

"Then, of course, he cannot be set at liberty," replied Iras, and there was additional shrillness in her voice. "He will do everything in his power for the woman he loves, and that is much—far more than you, who are half a stranger here, suspect. The Macedonian families stand by each other. He is a member of the council. The bands of the Ephebi will support him to a man. And the populace?—He lately spoiled the game of your brother, who was acting for me, in a way.—He was finally dragged out of the basin of the fountain, dripping with water and overwhelmed with shame."

"For that very reason his mouth must be closed."

Iras nodded assent, but after a short pause she exclaimed angrily: "I will help you to silence him, but not forever. Do you hear? Theodotus's saying about the dead dogs which do not bite brought no blessing to any one who followed it. There are other ways of getting rid of this man."

"A bird sang that you were not unfriendly to him."

"A bird? Then it was probably an owl, which cannot see in the daylight. His worst enemy, your brother, would probably sacrifice himself for his welfare sooner than I."

"Then I shall begin to feel sympathy for this Dion."

"I saw recently that your compassion surpassed mine. Death is not the hardest punishment."

"Is that the cause of this gracious respite?"

"Perhaps so. But there are other matters to be considered here. First, the condition of the times. Everything is tottering, even the royal power, which a short time ago was a wall which concealed many things and afforded shelter from every assault. Then Dion himself. I have already numbered those who will support him. Since the defeat at Actium, the Queen can no longer exclaim to that many-headed monster, the people, 'You must,' but 'I entreat.' The others——"

"The first considerations are enough; but may I be permitted to know what my wise friend has awarded to the hapless wight from whom she withdrew her favour?"

"First, imprisonment here at Lochias. He has stained his hands with the blood of Cæsarion, the King of kings. That is high treason, even in the eyes of the people. Try to obtain the order for the arrest this very day."

"Whenever I can disturb the Queen with such matters."

"Not for *my* sake, but to save *her* from injury. Away with everything which can cloud her intellect in these decisive days! First, away with Barine, who spoiled her return home; and then let us take care of the man who would be capable, for this woman's sake, of causing an insurrection in Alexandria. The great cares associated with the state and the throne are hers; for the minor ones of the toilet and the heart I will provide."

Here she was interrupted by one of Cleopatra's waiting-maids. The Queen had awakened, and Iras hastened to her post.

As she passed Charmian's apartments and saw two handsome soldiers, belonging to the Macedonian body-guard, pacing to and fro on duty before them, her face darkened. It was against her alone that Charmian was protecting Barine. She had been harshly reproved by the older woman on account of the artist's daughter, who had been

the source of so many incidents which had caused her pain, and Iras regretted that she had ever confided to her aunt her love for Dion. But, no matter what might happen, the upas-tree whence emanated all these tortures, anxieties, and vexations, must be rooted out—stricken from the ranks of the living.

Ere she entered the Queen's anteroom she had mentally pronounced sentence of death on her enemy. Her inventive brain was now busy in devising means to induce the Syrian to undertake its execution. If this stone of offence was removed it would again be possible to live in harmony with Charmian. Dion would be free, and then, much as he had wounded her, she would defend him from the hatred of Philostratus and his brother.

She entered the Queen's presence with a lighter heart. The death of a condemned person had long since ceased to move her deeply. While rendering the first services to her mistress, who had been much refreshed by her sleep, her face grew brighter and brighter; for Cleopatra voluntarily told her that she was glad to have her attendance, and not be constantly annoyed by the same disagreeable matter, which must soon be settled.

In fact, Charmian, conscious that no one else at court would have ventured to do so, had never grown weary, spite of many a rebuff, of pleading Barine's cause until, the day before, Cleopatra, in

a sudden fit of anger, had commanded her not to mention the mischief-maker again.

When Charmian soon after requested permission to let Iras take her place the following day, the Queen already regretted the harsh reproof she had given her friend, and, while cordially granting the desired leave, begged her to attribute her angry impatience to the cares which burdened her. "And when you show me your kind, faithful face again," she concluded, "you will have remembered that a true friend withholds from an unhappy woman whom she loves whatever will shadow more deeply her already clouded life. This Barine's very name sounds like a jeer at the composure I maintain with so much difficulty. I do not wish to hear it again."

The words were uttered in a tone so affectionate and winning, that Charmian's vexation melted like ice in the sun. Yet she left the Queen's presence anxious and troubled; for ere she quitted the room Cleopatra remarked that she had committed the singer's affairs to Alexas. She was now doubly eager to obtain a day's freedom, for she knew the unprincipled favourite's feelings towards the young beauty, and longed to discuss with Archibius the best means of guarding her from the worst perils.

When at a late hour she went to rest, she was served by the Nubian maid, who had accompanied her to the court from her parents' home. She came from the Cataract, where she had been bought when

the family of Alypius accompanied the child Cleopatra to the island of Philæ. Anukis was given to Charmian, who at the time was just entering womanhood, as the first servant who was her sole property, and she had proved so clever, skilful, apt to learn, and faithful, that her mistress took her, as her personal attendant, to the palace.

Charmian's warm, unselfish love for the Queen was equalled by Anukis's devotion to the mistress who had long since made her free, and had become so strongly attached to her that the Nubian's interests were little less regarded than her own. Her sound, keen judgment and natural wit had gained a certain renown in the palace, and as Cleopatra often condescended to rouse her to an apt answer, Antony had done so, too; and since the slight crook in the back, which she had from childhood, had grown into a hump, he gave her the name of Aisopion—the female Æsop. All the Queen's attendants now used it, and though others of lower rank did the same, she permitted it, though her ready wit would have supplied her tongue with a retort sharp enough to respond to any word which displeased her.

But she knew the life and fables of Æsop, who had also once been a slave, and deemed it an honour to be compared with him.

When Charmian had left Cleopatra and sought her chamber, she found Barine sound asleep, but Anukis was awaiting her, and her mistress told her

with what deep anxiety for Barine she had quitted the presence of the Queen. She knew that the Nubian was fond of the young matron, whom in her childhood she had carried in her arms, and whose father, Leonax, had often jested with her. The maid had watched her career with much interest, and while Barine had been her mistress's guest her efforts to amuse and soothe her were unceasing.

She had gone every morning to Berenike to ask tidings of Dion's health, and always brought favourable news. Anukis knew Philostratus and his brother, too, and as she liked Antony, who jested with her so kindly, she grieved to see an unprincipled fellow like Alexas his chief confidant. She knew the plots with which the Syrian had persecuted Barine, and when Charmian told her that the Queen had committed the young beauty's fate to this man's keeping her dark face grew fairly livid; but she forced herself to conceal the terror which the news inspired. Her mistress was also aware what this choice meant to Barine. But Anukis would have thought it wrong to disturb Charmian's sleep by revealing her own distress. It was fortunate that she was going early the next morning to seek the aid of Archibius, whom Anukis believed to be the wisest of men; but this by no means soothed her. She knew the fable of the lion and the mouse, which had been told in her home long before the time of the author for whom she was

nicknamed, and already more than once she had been in a position to render far greater and more powerful persons an important service. To soothe Charmian to sleep and turn her thoughts in another direction, she told her about Dion, whom she had found much better that day, how tenderly he seemed to love Barine, and how touchingly patient and worthy of her father the daughter of Leonax had been.

After her mistress had fallen asleep she went to the hall where, spite of the late hour, she expected to meet some of the servants—sure of being greeted as a welcome guest. When, a short time later, Alexas's body-slave appeared, she filled his wine cup, sat down by his side, and tried with all the powers at her command to win his confidence. And so well did the elderly Nubian succeed that Marsyas, a handsome young Ligurian, after she had gone, declared that Aisopion's jokes and stories were enough to bring the dead to life, and it was as pleasant to talk seriously with the brown-skinned monster as to dally with a fair-haired sweetheart.

After Charmian had left the palace the following morning, Anukis again sought Marsyas and learned from him for what purpose and at what hour Iras had summoned Alexas. His master was continually whispering with the languishing Macedonian.

When Anukis returned, Barine seemed troubled because she brought no tidings from her mother

and Dion; but the Nubian entreated her to have patience, and gave her some books and a spindle, that she might have occupation in her solitude. She, Anukis, must go to the kitchen, because she had heard yesterday that the cook had bought some mushrooms, which might be poisonous; she knew the fungi and wanted to see them.

Then, passing into Charmian's chamber, she glided through the corridor which connected the apartments of Cleopatra's confidential attendants, and slipped into Iras's room. When Alexas entered she was concealed behind one of the hangings which covered the walls of the reception-room.

After the Syrian had retired and Iras had been called away, Anukis returned to Barine and said that the mushrooms had really been poisonous, and of the deadliest species. They had been cooked, and she must go out to seek an antidote. Since a precious human life might be at stake, Barine would not wish to keep her.

"Go," said the latter, kindly. "But if you are the old obliging Aisopion, you won't object to going a little farther."

"And inquiring at the house near the Paneum garden," added Anukis. "That was already settled. Longing is also a poison for a loving heart, and its antidote is good news."

With these laughing words she left her favourite; but as soon as she was out of doors her black brow became lined with earnest thought, and she

stood pondering a long time. At last she went to the Bruchium to hire a donkey to ride to Kanopus, where she hoped to find Archibius. It was difficult to reach the nearest stand; for a great crowd had assembled on the quay between the Lochias and the Corner of the Muses, and groups of the common people, sailors, and slaves were constantly flocking hither. But she at last forced her way to the spot and, while the driver was helping her to mount the animal she had chosen, she asked what had attracted the throng, and he answered:

"They are tearing down the house of the old Museum fungus, Didymus."

"How can that be?" cried the startled woman. "The good old man!"

"Good?" repeated the driver, scornfully. "He's a traitor, who has caused all the trouble. Philostratus, the brother of the great Alexas, a friend of Mark Antony, told us so. He wanted to prove it, so it must be true. Hear the shouts, and how the stones are flying! Yes, yes. His granddaughter and her lover set an ambush for the King Cæsarion. They would have killed him, but the watch interfered, and now he lies wounded on his couch. If mighty Isis does not lend her aid, the young prince's life will soon be over."

Then, turning to the donkey, he dealt him two severe blows on the right and left haunches, shouting: "Hi, Grey! It does one good to hear that royal backs have room for the cudgel too."

Meanwhile, the Nubian was hesitating whether she should not first turn the donkey to the right and seek Didymus; but Barine was threatened by greater peril, and her life was of more value than the welfare of the aged pair. This decided the question, and she rode forward.

The donkey and his driver did their best, but they came too late; for in the little palace at Kanopus, Anukis learned from the porter that Archibius had gone to the city with his old friend Timagenes, the historian, who lived in Rome, and seemed to have come to Alexandria as an envoy.

Charmian, too, had been here, but also failed to find the master of the house, and followed him. Evil tidings—which, owing to the loss of time involved, might prove fatal. If the donkey had only been swifter! True, Archibius's stable was full of fine animals, but who was she that she should presume to use them? Yet she had gained something which rendered her the equal of many who were born free and occupied a higher station—the reputation for trustworthiness and wisdom; and relying upon this, she told the faithful old steward, as far as possible, what was at stake, and soon after he himself took her, both mounted on swift mules, to the city and the Paneum garden.

He chose the nearest road thither through the Gate of the Sun and the Kanopic Way. Usually at this hour it was crowded with people, but to-day few persons were astir. All the idlers had thronged

to the Bruchium and the harbour to see the returning ships of the vanquished fleet, hear something new, witness the demonstrations of joy, the sacrifices and processions, and—if Fortune favoured—meet the Queen and relieve their overflowing hearts by acclamations.

When the carriage turned towards the left and approached the Paneum, progress for the first time became difficult. A dense crowd had gathered around the hill on whose summit the sanctuary of Pan dominated the spacious garden. Anukis's eye perceived the tall figure of Philostratus. Was the mischief-maker everywhere? This time he seemed to encounter opposition, for loud shouts interrupted his words. Just as the carriage passed he pointed to the row of houses in which the widow of Leonax lived, but violent resistance followed the gesture.

Anukis perceived what restrained the crowd; for, as the equipage approached its destination, a body of armed youths stopped it. Their finely-formed limbs, steeled by the training of the Palæstra, and the raven, chestnut, and golden locks floating around their well-shaped heads, were indeed beautiful. They were a band of the Ephebi, formerly commanded by Archibius, and to whose leadership more recently Dion had been elected. The youths had heard what had occurred—that imprisonment, perhaps even worse disaster, threatened him. At any other time it would scarcely

have been possible to oppose the decree of the Government and guard their imperilled friend, but in these dark days the rulers must deal with them. Though they were loyal to the Queen, and had resolved, spite of her defeat, to support her cause, as soon as she needed them, they would not suffer Dion to be punished for a crime which, in their eyes, was an honour. Their determination to protect him grew more eager with every vexatious delay on the part of the city council to deal with a matter which concerned one of their own body. They had not yet decided whether to demand a full pardon or only a mild sentence for the man who had wounded the "King of kings," the son of the sovereign. Moreover, the quiet Cæsarion, still subject to his tutor, had not understood how to win the favour of the Ephebi. The weakling never appeared in the Palæstra, which even the great Mark Antony did not disdain to visit. The latter had more than once given the youths assembled there proofs of his giant strength, and his son Antyllus also frequently shared their exercises. Dion had merely dealt Cæsarion with his clenched fist one of the blows which every one must encounter in the arena.

Philotas of Amphissa, the pupil of Didymus, had been the first to inform them of the attack and, with fiery zeal, had used his utmost power to atone for the wrong done to his master's granddaughter. His appeal had roused the most eager

sympathy. The Ephebi believed themselves strong enough to defend their friend against any one and, if the worst should come, they knew they would be sustained by the council, the Exegetus, the captain of the guard—a brave Macedonian, who had once been an ornament of their own band—and the numerous clients of Dion and his family. There was not a single weakling among them. They had already found an opportunity to prove this; for, though they had arrived too late to protect Didymus's property from injury, they had checked the fury of the mob whose passions Philostratus had aroused, and forced back the crowd whom the Syrian led to Barine's dwelling to devote it to the same fate.

Another equipage was already standing before the door of Berenike's house—one of the carriages which were always at the disposal of the Queen's officials—when Anukis left Archibius's vehicle. Had some of Alexas's myrmidons arrived, or was he himself on the way to examine Dion, or even arrest him? The driver, like all the palace servants, knew Anukis, and she learned from him that he had brought Gorgias, the architect.

Anukis had never met the latter, though, during the rebuilding of Cæsarion's apartments, she had often seen him, and heard much of him; among other things, that Dion's beautiful palace was his work. He was a friend of the wounded man, so she need not fear him.

When she entered the atrium she heard that Berenike had gone out to drive with Archibius and his Roman friend. The leech had forbidden his patient to see many visitors. No one had been admitted except Gorgias and one of Dion's freedmen.

But time pressed; people of the same rank and disposition understand one another; the old porter and the Nubian were both loyal to their employers, and, moreover, were natives of the same country; so it required only a few words to persuade the door-keeper to conduct her without delay to the bedside of the wounded man.

The freedman, a tall, weather-beaten grey-beard, simply clad, who looked like a pilot, was waiting outside the sick-room. He had not yet been admitted to Dion's presence, but this did not appear to vex him, for he stood leaning quietly against the wall beside the door, gazing at the broad-brimmed sailor's hat which he was slowly turning in his hands.

Scarcely had Dion heard Anukis's name, when an eager "Let her come in" reached her ears through the half-open door.

The Nubian waited to be summoned, but her dark face must have showed distinctly that something important and urgent had brought her here, for the wounded man added to his first words of greeting the expression of a fear that she had no good news.

Her reply was an eager nod of assent, accompanied by a doubtful glance at Gorgias; and Dion now curtly told the architect the name of the newcomer, and assured her that his friend might hear everything, even the greatest secret.

Anukis uttered a sigh of relief and then, in a tone of the most earnest warning, poured forth the story of the impending danger. She would not be satisfied when he spoke of the Ephebi, who were ready to defend him, and the council, which would make the cause of one of its members its own, but entreated him to seek some safe place of refuge, no matter where; for powers against whom no resistance would avail were stretching their hands towards him. Even this statement, however, proved useless, for Dion was convinced that the influence of his uncle, the Keeper of the Seal, would guard him from any serious danger. Then Anukis resolved to confess what she had overheard; but she told the story without mentioning Barine, and the peril threatening her also. Finally, with all the warmth of a really anxious heart, she entreated him to heed her warning.

Even while she was still speaking, the friends exchanged significant glances; but scarcely had the last words fallen from her lips when the giant figure of the freedman passed through the door, which had remained open.

"You here, Pyrrhus?" cried the wounded man kindly.

"Yes, master, it is I," replied the stalwart fellow, twirling his sailor hat still faster. "Listening isn't exactly my trade, and I don't usually enter your presence uninvited; but I couldn't help hearing what came through the door, and the croaking of the old raven drew me in."

"I wish you had heard more cheerful things," replied Dion; "but the brown-skinned bird of ill omen usually sings pleasant songs, and they all come from a faithful heart. But when my silent Pyrrhus opens his mouth so far, something important must surely follow, and you can speak freely in her presence."

The sailor cleared his throat, gripped his coarse felt hat in his sinewy hands, and said, in such a tremulous, embarrassed tone that his heavy chin quivered and his voice sometimes faltered: "If the woman is to be trusted, you must leave here, master, and seek some safe hiding-place. I came to offer one. On my way I heard your name. It was said that you had wounded the Queen's son, and it might cost you your life. Then I thought: 'No, no, not that, so long as Pyrrhus lives, who taught his young master Dion to use the oars and to set his first sail—Pyrrhus and his family.' Why repeat what we both know well enough? From my first boat and the land on our island to the liberty you bestowed upon us, we owe everything to your father and to you, and a blessing has rested upon your gift and our labour,

and what is mine is yours. No more words are needed. You know our cliff beyond the Alveus Steganus, north of the great harbour—the Isle of Serpents. It is quickly gained by any one who knows the course through the water, but is as inaccessible to others as the moon and stars. People are afraid of the mere name, though we rid the island of the vermin long ago. My boys Dionysus, Dionichus, and Dionikus—they all have 'Dion' in their name—are waiting in the fish-market, and when it grows dusk——" Here the wounded man interrupted the speaker by holding out his hand and thanking him warmly for his fidelity and kindness, though he refused the well-meant invitation. He admitted that he knew no safer hiding-place than the cliff surrounded by fluttering sea-gulls, where Pyrrhus lived with his family and earned abundant support by fishing and serving as pilot. But anxiety concerning his future wife prevented his leaving the city.

The freedman however gave him no rest. He represented how quickly the harbour could be reached from his island, that fish were brought thence from it daily, and he would therefore always have news of what was passing. His sons were like him, and never used any unnecessary words; talking did not suit them. The women of the household rarely left the island. So long as it sheltered their beloved guest, they should not set foot away from it. If occasion should require, the

master could be in Alexandria again quickly enough to put anything right.

This suggestion pleased the architect, who joined in the conversation to urge the freedman's request. But Dion, for Barine's sake, obstinately refused, until Anukis, who had long been anxious to go in pursuit of Archibius, thought it time to give *her* opinion.

"Go with the man, my lord!" she cried. "I know what I know. I will tell our Barine of your faithful resolution; but how can she show her gratitude for it if you are a dead man?"

This question and the information which followed it turned the scale; and, as soon as Dion had consented to accompany the freedman, the Nubian prepared to continue her errands, but the wounded man detained her to give many messages for Barine, and then she was stopped by the architect, who thought he had found in her the right assistant for numerous plans he had in his mind.

He had returned early that morning from Heroonpolis, where, with other members of his profession, he had inspected the newly constructed waterway. The result of the first investigation had been unfavourable to the verge of discouragement; and, in behalf of the others, he had gone to the Queen to persuade her to give up the enterprise which, though so full of promise, was impracticable in the short time at their disposal.

He had travelled all night, and was received as

soon as Cleopatra rose from her couch. He had driven from the Lochias in the carriage placed at his disposal because he had business at the arsenal and various points where building was going on, in order to inspect the wall erected for Antony on the Choma, and the Temple of Isis at the Corner of the Muses, to which Cleopatra desired to add a new building. But scarcely had he quitted the Bruchium when he was detained by the crowd assailing the house of Didymus with beams and rams, and at the same time keeping off the Ephebi who had attacked them.

He had forced his way through the raging mob to aid the old couple and their granddaughter. The slave Phryx had been busily preparing the boats which lay moored in the harbour of the sea-washed estate, but Gorgias had found it difficult to persuade the grey-haired philosopher to go with him and his family to the shore. He was ready to face the enraged rioters and—though it should cost his life—cry out that they were shamefully deceived and were staining themselves with a disgraceful crime. Not until the architect represented that it was unworthy of a Didymus to expose to bestial violence a life on which helpless women and the whole world—to whom his writings were guide-posts to the realms of truth—possessed a claim, could he be induced to yield. Nevertheless, the sage and his relatives almost fell into the hands of the furious rabble, for Didymus would

not depart until he had saved this, that, and the other precious book, till the number reached twenty or thirty. Besides, his old deaf wife, who usually submitted quietly when her defective hearing prevented her comprehension of many things, insisted upon knowing what was occurring. She ordered everybody who came near her to explain what had happened, thus detaining her granddaughter Helena, who was trying to save the most valuable articles in the dwelling. So the departure was delayed, and only the brave defence of young Philotas, Didymus's assistant, and some of the Ephebi, who joined him, enabled them to escape unharmed.

The Scythian guards, which at last put a stop to the frantic rage of the deluded populace, arrived too late to prevent the destruction of the house, but they saved Philotas and the other youths from the fists and stones of the rabble.

When the boats had gone farther out into the harbour the question of finding a home for the philosopher and his family was discussed. Berenike's house was also threatened, and the rules of the museum prevented the reception of women. Five servants had accompanied the family, and none of Didymus's learned friends had room for so many guests. When the old man and Helena began to enumerate the lodgings of which they could think, Gorgias interposed with an entreaty that they would come to his house.

He had inherited the dwelling from his father. It was very large and spacious, almost empty, and they could reach it speedily, as it stood on the seashore, north of the Forum. The fugitives would be entirely at liberty there, since he had work on hand which would permit him to spend no time under his own roof except at night. He soon overcame the trivial objections made by the philosopher and, fifteen minutes after they had left the Corner of the Muses, he was permitted to open the door of his house to his guests, and he did so with genuine pleasure. The old housekeeper and the grey-haired steward, who had been in his father's service, looked surprised, but worked zealously after Gorgias had confided the visitors to their charge. The pressure of business forbade his fulfilling the duties of host in his own person.

Didymus and his family had reason to be grateful; and when the old sage found in the large library which the architect placed at his disposal many excellent books and among them some of his own, he ceased his restless pacing to and fro and forced himself to settle down. Then he remembered that, by the advice of a friend, he had placed his property in the keeping of a reliable banker and, though life still seemed dark grey, it no longer looked as black as before.

Gorgias briefly related all this to the Nubian, and Dion added that she would find Archibius with his Roman friend at the house of Berenike's

brother, the philosopher Arius. Like himself, the latter was suffering from an injury inflicted by a reckless trick of Antyllus. Barine's mother was there also, so Anukis could inform them of the fate of Didymus and his brother, and tell them that he, Dion, intended to leave her house and the city an hour after sunset.

"But," interrupted Gorgias, "no one, not even your hostess Berenike and her brother, must know your destination.—You look as if you could keep a secret, woman."

"Though she owes her nickname Aisopion to her nimble tongue," replied Dion.

"But this tongue is like the little silver fish with scarlet spots in the palace garden," said Anukis. "They dart to and fro nimbly enough; but as soon as danger threatens they keep as quiet in the water as though they were nailed fast. And —by mighty Isis!—we have no lack of peril in these trying times. Would you like to see the lady Berenike and the others before your departure?"

"Berenike, yes; but the sons of Arius—they are fine fellows—would be wise to keep aloof from this house to-day."

"Yes indeed!" the architect chimed in. "It will be prudent for their father, too, to seek some hiding-place. He is too closely connected with Octavianus. It may indeed happen that the Queen will desire to make use of him. In that case he may be able to aid Barine, who is his sister's child.

Timagenes, too, who comes from Rome as a mediator, may have some influence."

"The same thoughts entered my poor brain also," said Anukis. "I am now going to show the gentlemen the danger which threatens her, and if I succeed—— Yet what could a serving-woman of my appearance accomplish? Still—my house is nearer to the brink of the stream than the dwelling of most others, and if I fling in a loaf, perhaps the current will bear it to the majestic sea."

"Wise Aisopion!" cried Dion; but the worthy maid-servant shrugged her crooked shoulders, saying: "We needn't be free-born to find pleasure in what is right; and if being wise means using one's brains to think, with the intention of promoting right and justice, you can always call me so. Then you will start after sundown?"

With these words she was about to leave the room, but the architect, who had watched her every movement, had formed a plan and begged her to follow him.

When they reached the next room he asked for a faithful account of Barine and the dangers threatening her. After consulting her as if she were an equal, he held out his hand in farewell, saying: "If it is possible to bring her to the Temple of Isis unseen, these clouds may scatter. I shall be in the sanctuary of the goddess from the first hour after sunset. I have some measurements to take there. When you say you know that the im-

mortals will have pity on the innocent woman whom they have led to the verge of the abyss, perhaps you may be right. It seems as if matters here were combining in a way which would be apt to rob the story-teller of his listener's faith."

After Aisopion had gone, Gorgias returned to Dion's room and asked the freedman to be ready with his boat at a place on the shore which he carefully described.

The friends were again alone. Gorgias had his hands full of work, but he could not help expressing his surprise at the calm bearing which Dion maintained. "You behave as if you were going to an oyster supper at Kanopus," he said, shaking his head as though perplexed by some incomprehensible problem.

"What else would you have me do?" asked the Macedonian. "The vivid imagination of you artists shows you the future according to your own varying moods. If you hope, you transform a pleasant garden into the Elysian fields; if you fear anything, you behold in a burning roof the conflagration of a world. We, from whose cradle the Muse was absent, who use only sober reason to provide for the welfare of the household and the state, as well as for our own, see facts as they are and treat them like figures in a sum. I know that Barine is in danger. That might drive me frantic; but beyond her I see Archibius and Charmian spreading their protecting wings over her head; I perceive the fear

of my faction, including the museum, of the council of which I am a member, of my clients and the conditions of the times, which precludes arousing the wrath of the citizens. The product which results from the correct addition of all these known quantities——"

"Will be correct," interrupted his friend, "so long as the most incalculable of all factors, passion, does not blend with them—the passion of a woman—and the Queen belongs to the sex which is certainly more powerful in that domain."

"Granted! But as soon as Mark Antony returns it will be proved that her jealousy was needless."

"We will hope so. It is only the misled, deceived, abused Cleopatra whom I fear; for she herself is matchless in divine goodness. The charm by which she ensnares hearts is indescribable, and the iron power of her intellect! I tell you, Dion——"

"Friend, friend," was the laughing interruption. "How high your wishes soar! For three years I have kept an account of the conflagrations in your heart. I believe we had reached seventeen; but this last one is equal to two."

"Folly!" cried Gorgias in an irritated tone. "May not a man admire what is magnificent, wonderful, unique? She is all these things! Just now —how long ago is it?—she appeared before me in a radiance of beauty——"

"Which should have made you shade both eyes. Yet you have been speaking so warmly of your young guest, her loving caution, her gentle calmness in the midst of peril——"

"Do you suppose I wish to recall a single syllable?" the architect indignantly broke in. "Helena has no peer among the maidens of Alexandria —but the other—Cleopatra—is elevated in her divine majesty above all ordinary mortals. You might spare me and yourself that scornful curl of the lip. Had she gazed into your face with those tearful, sorrowful eyes, as she did into mine, and spoken of her misery, you would have gone through fire and water, hand in hand with me, for her sake. I am not a man who is easily moved, and since my father's death the only tears I have seen have been shed by others; but when she talked of the mausoleum I was to build for her because Fate, she knew not how soon, might force her to seek refuge in the arms of death, my calmness vanished. Then, when she numbered me among the friends on whom she could rely and held out her hand—a matchless hand—oh! laugh if you choose— I felt I know not how, and kneeling at her feet I kissed it; it was wet with my tears. I am not ashamed of this emotion, and my lips seem consecrated since they touched the little white hand which spoke a language of its own and stands before my eyes wherever I gaze."

Pushing back his thick locks from his brow as

he spoke, he shook his head as though dissatisfied with himself and, in an altered tone, hurriedly continued: "But this is a time ill-suited for such ebullitions of feeling. I mentioned the mausoleum, whose erection the Queen desires. She will see the first hasty sketch to-morrow. It is already before my mind's eye. She wished to have it adjoin the Temple of Isis, her goddess—— I proposed the great sanctuary in the Rhakotis quarter, but she objected—she wished to have it close to the palace at Lochias. She had thought of the temple at the Corner of the Muses, but the house occupied by Didymus stood in the way of a larger structure. If this were removed it would be possible to carry the street through the old man's garden, perhaps even to the sea-shore, and we should have had space for a gigantic edifice and still left room for a fine garden. But we had learned how the philosopher loved his family estate. The Queen is unwilling to use violence towards the old man—— She is just, and perhaps other reasons, of which I am ignorant, influence her. So I promised to look for another site, though I saw how much she desired to have her tomb connected with the sanctuary of her favourite goddess—— Then—I have already told the clever brown witch—then the immortals, Divinity, Fate, or whatever we call the power which guides the world and our lives according to eternal laws and its own mysterious, omnipotent will, permitted a rascally deed, from

which I think may come deliverance for you and a source of pleasure to the Queen in these days of trial."

"Man, man! Where will this new passion lead you? The horses are stamping impatiently outside; duty summons the most faithful of men, and he stands like a prophet, indulging in mysterious sayings!"

"Whose meaning and purport, spite of your calm calculations of existing circumstances, will soon seem no less wonderful to you than to me, whose unruly artist nature, according to your opinion, is playing me a trick," retorted the architect. "Now listen to this explanation: Didymus's house will be occupied at once by my workmen, but I shall examine the lower rooms of the Temple of Isis. I have with me a document requiring obedience to my orders. Cleopatra herself laid the plans before me, even the secret portion showing the course of the subterranean chambers. It will cast some light upon my mysterious sayings if I bear you away from the enemy through one of the secret corridors. They were right in concealing from you by how slender a thread, spite of the power of your example in mathematics, the sword hangs above your head. Now that I see a possibility of removing it, I can show it to you. Tomorrow you would have fallen, without hope of rescue, into the hands of cruel foes and been shamefully abandoned by your own weak uncle, had not

the most implacable of all your enemies permitted himself the infamous pleasure of laying hands on an old man's house, and the Queen, in consequence of an agitating message, had the idea suggested of building her own mausoleum. The corridor "—here he lowered his voice—" of which I spoke leads to the sea at a spot close beside Didymus's garden, and through it I will guide you, and, if possible, Barine also, to the shore. This could be accomplished in the usual way only by the greatest risk. If we use the passage we can reach a dark place on the strand unseen, and unless some special misfortune pursues us our flight will be unnoticed. The litters and your tottering gait would betray everything if we were to enter the boat anywhere else in the great harbour."

"And we, sensible folk, refuse to believe in miracles!" cried Dion, holding out his wan hand to the architect. "How shall I thank you, you dear, clever, most loyal of friends to your male friends, though your heart is so faithless to fair ones? Add that malicious speech to the former ones, for which I now crave your pardon. What you intend to accomplish for Barine and me gives you a right to do and say to me whatever ill you choose all the rest of my life. Anxiety for her would surely have bound me to this house and the city when the time came to make the escape, for without her my life would now be valueless. But when I think that she might follow me to Pyrrhus's cliff——"

"Don't flatter yourself with this hope," pleaded Gorgias. "Serious obstacles may interpose. I am to have another talk with the Nubian later. With no offence to others, I believe her advice will be the best. She knows how matters stand with the lofty, and yet herself belongs to the lowly. Besides, through Charmian the way to the Queen lies open, and nothing which happens at court escapes her notice. She showed me that we must consider Barine's delivery to Alexas a piece of good fortune. How easily jealousy might have led to a fatal crime one whose wish promptly becomes action, unless she curbs the undue zeal of her living tools! Those on whom Fate inflicts so many blows rarely are in haste to spare others. Would the anxieties which weigh upon her like mountains interpose between the Queen and the jealous rancour which is too petty for her great soul?"

"What is great or petty to the heart of a loving woman?" asked Dion. "In any case you will do what you can to remove Barine from the power of the enraged princess—I know."

Gorgias pressed his friend's hand closely, then, yielding to a sudden impulse, kissed him on the forehead and hurried to the door.

On the threshold a faint moan from the wounded man stopped him. Would he be strong enough to follow the long passage leading to the sea?

Dion protested that he confidently expected to

do so, but his deeply flushed face betrayed that the fever which had once been conquered had returned.

Gorgias's eyes sought the floor in deep thought. Many sick persons were borne to the temple in the hope of cure; so Dion's appearance would cause no special surprise. On the other hand, to have strangers carry him through the passage seemed perilous. He himself was strong, but even the strongest person would have found it impossible to support the heavy burden of a grown man to the sea, for the gallery was low and of considerable length. Still, if necessary, he would try. With the comforting exclamation, "If your strength does not suffice, another way will be found," he took his leave, gave Barine's maid and the wounded man's body-slave the necessary directions, commanded the door-keeper to admit no one save the physician, and stepped into the open air.

A little band of Ephebi were pacing to and fro before the house. Others had flung themselves down in an open space surrounded by shrubbery in the Paneum garden, and were drinking the choice wine which Dion's cellarer, by his orders, had brought and was pouring out for the crowd.

It was an animated scene, for the clients of the sufferer, who, after expressing their sympathy, had been dismissed by the porter, and bedizened girls had joined the youths. There was no lack of jests and laughter, and when some pretty young

mother or female slave passed by leading children, with whom the garden was a favourite playground, many a merry word was exchanged.

Gorgias waved his hands gaily to the youths, pleased with the cheerfulness with which the brave fellows transformed duty into a festival, and many raised their wine-cups, shouting a joyous "Io" and "Evoe," to drink the health of the famous artist who not long ago had been one of themselves.

The others were led by a slender youth, the student Philotas, from Amphissa, Didymus's assistant, whom the architect, a few days before, had helped to liberate from the demons of wine. Even while Gorgias was beckoning to him from the two-wheeled chariot, the thought entered his mind that yonder handsome youth, who had so deeply wronged Barine and Dion, would be the very person to help carry his friend through the low-roofed passage to the sea. If Philotas was the person Gorgias believed him to be, he would deem it a special favour to make amends for his crime to those whom he had injured, and he was not mistaken; for, after the youth had taken a solemn oath not to betray the secret to any one, the architect asked him to aid in Dion's rescue. Philotas, overflowing with joyful gratitude, protested his willingness to do so, and promised to wait at the appointed spot in the Temple of Isis at the time mentioned.

CHAPTER XIV.

While Gorgias was examining the subterranean chambers in the Temple of Isis, Charmian returned to Lochias earlier than she herself had expected. She had met her brother, whom she did not find at Kanopus, at Berenike's, and after greeting Dion on his couch of pain, she told Archibius of her anxiety. She confided to him alone that the Queen had committed Barine's fate to Alexas, for the news might easily have led the mother of the endangered woman to some desperate venture; but even Archibius's composure, so difficult to disturb, was not proof against it. He would have sought the Queen's presence at once—if necessary, forced his way to it; but the historian Timagenes, who had just come from Rome, was expecting him, and he had not returned to his birthplace as a private citizen, but commissioned by Octavianus to act as mediator in putting an end to the struggle which had really been decided in his favour at the battle of Actium. The choice of this mediator was a happy one; for he had taught Cleopatra in her childhood, and was the self-

same quick-witted man who had so often roused her to argument. His share in a popular insurrection against the Roman rule had led to his being carried as a slave to the Tiber. There he soon purchased his freedom, and attained such distinction that Octavianus entrusted this important mission to the man who was so well known in Alexandria. Archibius was to meet him at the house of Arius, who was still suffering from the wounds inflicted by the chariot-wheels of Antyllus, and Berenike had accompanied Timagenes to her brother.

Charmian did not venture to go there; a visit to Octavianus's former teacher would have been misinterpreted, and it was repugnant to her own delicacy of feeling to hold intercourse at this time with the foe and conqueror of her royal mistress.

She therefore let her brother drive with Berenike to the injured man's; but before his departure Archibius had promised, if the worst came, to dare everything to open the eyes of the Queen, who had forbidden her, Charmian, to speak in behalf of Barine and thwart the plans of Alexas.

From the Paneum garden she was carried to the Kanopic Way and the Jewish quarter, where she had many important purchases to make for Cleopatra. It was long after noon when the litter was again borne to Lochias.

On the way she had severely felt her own powerlessness. Without having accomplished any-

thing herself, she was forced to wait for the success of others; and she had scarcely crossed the threshold of the palace ere fresh cares were added to those which already burdened her soul.

She understood how to read the faces of courtiers, and the door-keeper's had taught her that since her departure something momentous had occurred. She disliked to question the slaves and lower officials, so she refrained, though the interior of the palace was crowded with guards, officials of every grade, attendants, and slaves. Many who saw her gazed at her with the timidity inspired by those over whom some disaster is impending. Others, whose relations were more intimate, pressed forward to enjoy the mournful satisfaction of being the first messengers of evil tidings. But she passed swiftly on, keeping them back with grave words and gestures, until, before the door of the great anteroom thronged with Greek and Egyptian petitioners, she met Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal. Charmian stopped him and inquired what had happened.

"Since when?" asked the old courtier. "Every moment has brought some fresh tidings and all are mournful. What terrible times, Charmian, what disasters!"

"No messenger had arrived when I left the Lochias," replied Charmian. "Now it seems as though the old monster of a palace, accustomed to so many horrors, is holding its breath in dread.

Tell me the main thing, at least, before I meet the Queen."

"The main thing? Pestilence or famine—which shall we call the worse?"

"Quick, Zeno! I am expected."

"I, too, am in haste, and really there is nothing to relate over which the tongue would care to dwell. Candidus arrived first. Came himself straight from Actium. The fellow is bold enough."

"Is the army defeated also?"

"Defeated, dispersed, deserted to the foe—King Herod with his legions in the van."

Charmian covered her face with her hands and groaned aloud, but Zeno continued:

"You were with her in the flight. When Mark Antony left you, he sailed with the ships which joined him for Parætonium. A large body of troops on which the Queen and Mardion had fixed their hopes was encamped there. Reinforcements could easily be gained and we should once more have a fine army at our disposal."

"Pinarius Scarpus, a cautious soldier, was in command; and I, too, believed——"

"The more you trusted him, the greater would be your error. The shameless rascal—he owes everything to Antony—had received tidings of Actium ere the ships arrived, and had already made overtures to Octavianus when the Imperator came. The veterans who opposed the treachery were hewn down by the wretch's orders, but the

brave garrison of the city could not be won over to the monstrous crime. It is due to these men that Mark Antony still lives and did not come to a miserable end at the hands of his own troops. The twice-defeated general—a courier brought the news—will arrive to-night. Strangely enough, he will not come to Lochias, but to the little palace on the Choma."

"Poor, poor Queen!" cried Charmian; "how did she bear all this?"

"In the presence of the defeated Candidus and Antony's messenger like a heroine. But afterwards —— Her raving did not last long; but the mute, despairing silence!—— Ere she had fully recovered her self-command she sent us all away, and I have not seen her since. But all the thoughts and feelings which dwell here"—he pointed to his brow and breast —"have left their abode and linger with her. I totter from place to place like a soulless body. O Charmian! what has befallen us? Where are the days when care and trouble lay buried with the other dead —the days and nights when my brain united with that of the Queen to transform this desolate earth into the beautiful Elysian Fields, every-day life to a festival, festivals to the very air of Olympus? What unprecedented scenes of splendour had I not devised for the celebration of the victory, the triumph—nay, even the entry into Rome! Whole chests are filled with the sketches, programmes, drawings, and verses. All who handle brush and

chisel, compose and execute music, would have lent their aid, and—you may believe me—the result would have been something which future generations would have discussed, lauded, and extolled in song. And now—now?"

"Now we will double our efforts to save what is yet to be rescued!"

"Rescued?" repeated the courtier in a hollow tone. "The Queen, too, still clings to this fine word. When I saw her at work yesterday, it seemed as if I beheld her drawing water with the bottomless vessel of the Danaides. True, to-day, when I left her, her arms had fallen—and in this attitude she now stands before me with her tearful eyes. And besides, I can't get my nephew Dion out of my mind. Cares—nothing but cares concerning him! And my intentions towards him were so kind! My will gives him my entire fortune; but now he actually wants to marry the singer, the daughter of the artist Leonax. You have taken her under your protection, but surely your own niece, Iras, is dearer to you, so you will approve of my destroying the will if Dion insists upon his own way. He shall not have a solidus of my property if he does not give up the woman who is a thorn in the Queen's flesh. And his choice does not suit our ancient race. Iras, on the contrary, was Dion's playfellow, and I have long destined her for his wife. No better match, nor one more acceptable to the Queen, could be found

for him. He cared for her until the singer bewitched him. Bring them together, and they shall be like my own children. If the fool resists his uncle, whose sole desire is to benefit him, I will withdraw my aid. Whatever intrigues his foes may weave, I shall fold my arms and not interfere. I stand in the place of his father, my dead brother, and demand obedience. The Queen is my universe, and her favour is of more value than twenty refractory nephews."

"You will retain her Majesty's favour, even if you intercede for your brother's son."

"And Iras? When she finds herself deceived—and she will soon discover it—she will not rest——"

"Until she has brought ruin upon him," interrupted Charmian, in a tone of sorrow rather than reproach as though she already beheld the impending disaster. "But Iras has no greater influence with the Queen than I, and if you and I unite to protect the brave young fellow, who is of your own blood——"

"Then, of course—no doubt, on account of your longer period of service, you have more influence with her Majesty than Iras—however—such matters must be considered—and I have already said—my mind leaves its abode to follow the Queen like her shadow. It heeds only what concerns her. Let everything else go as it will. The fleet the same as destroyed, Candidus defeated, Herod a deserter, treason on treason—the African

legions lost! What in the name of the god who tried to roll back the wheel dashing down the mountain-side!—— And yet! Let us offer sacrifices, my friend, and hope for better days!"

Zeno retired as he spoke, but Charmian moved forward with a drooping head to find Barine and her faithful Anukis, and weep her fill ere she went to perform the duty of consoling and sustaining her beloved mistress. Yet she herself so sorely needed comfort. Wherever she turned her eyes she beheld disaster, peril, treachery, and base intrigues. She felt as if she had lived long enough, and that her day was over. Hitherto her gentle nature, her intellect, which yearned to expand, gather new riches, and exchange what it had gained with others, had possessed much to offer to the Queen. She had not only been Cleopatra's confidante, but necessary to her to discuss questions far in advance of the demands of the times, which occupied her restless mind. Now the Queen's attention was wholly absorbed by events—hard, cruel facts—which she must resist or turn to her own advantage. Her life had become a conflict, and Charmian felt that she was by no means combative. The hard, supple, keenly polished intellect of Iras now asserted its value, and the elderly woman told herself that she was in danger of being held in less regard than her younger companion. To resign her office would have given her peace of mind, but she repelled the thought. For the very reason

that these days were so full of misery and perhaps drawing nearer to the end, she must remain, first for the sake of the Queen, but also to watch over Barine.

Now she longed to go to Cleopatra. Her mere presence, she knew, would do her sore heart good.

The silvery laugh of a child reached her ears through the open gate of the garden which she was rapidly approaching. Little six-year-old Alexander ran towards her with open arms, hugged her closely, pressed his curly head against her, and gazed into her face with his large clear eyes.

Charmian's heart swelled; and as she raised the child in her arms and kissed him, she thought of the sad fate impending, and the composure maintained with so much difficulty gave way; tears streamed from her eyes and, sobbing violently, she pressed the boy closer to her breast.

The prince, accustomed to bright faces and tender caresses, broke away from her in terror to run back to his brother and sisters. But he had a kind little heart, and, knowing that no one weeps and sobs unless in pain, Alexander pitied Charmian, whom he loved, and hurried to her again.

What he meant to show her had pleased his mother, too, and dried the tears in her eyes. So he took Charmian by the hand and drew her along, saying that he wanted her to see the prettiest thing. She willingly allowed herself to be led over the paths, strewn with red sand, of the little garden

which Antony had had laid out for his children in the magnificent style which pleased his love of splendour, and filled with rare and beautiful things.

There was a pond with tiny gold and silver fish, where the rare lotus flowers with pink blossoms arose from amid their smooth green leaves, and another where dwarf ducks of every colour, which seemed as if they had been created for children, swam to and fro. A bit of the sea which washed its shore had been enclosed by a gilded lattice-work, and on its surface floated a number of snow-white swans and black ones with scarlet bills. Native and Indian flowers of every hue adorned the beds, and the narrow paths were shaded by arbours made of gold wire, over which ran climbing vines filled with bright blossoms.

A grotto of stalactites behind the dense foliage of an Indian tree offered a resting-place, and beside it was a little house where the children could stay. The interior lacked none of the requisites of living, not even the cooking utensils in the kitchen, and the family portraits in the tablinum, delicately painted by an artist on small ivory slabs. Everything was made to suit the size of children, but of the most costly material and careful workmanship.

Behind the house was a little stable where four tiny horses with spotted skins, the rarest and prettiest creatures imaginable—a gift from the King of Media—were stamping the ground.

In another place was an enclosure containing gazelles, ostriches, young giraffes, and other grass-eating animals. Bright-plumaged birds and monkeys filled the tops of the trees, gay balls rose and fell on the jets of the fountains, and child genii and images of the gods in bronze and marble peered from the foliage. This whole enchanted world was comprised within a narrow space, and, with its radiance of colour and wealth of form, its perfume, songs, and warbling, exerted a bewildering influence upon the excited imaginations of grown people as well as children.

Little Alexander, without even casting a glance at all this, drew Charmian forward. He did not pause until he reached the shore of the lotus pond; then, putting his fingers on his lips, he said: "There, now, I'll show you. Look here!"

Rising cautiously upon tip-toe as he spoke, he pointed to the hollow in the trunk of a tree. A pair of finches had built their nest in it, and five young ones with big yellow beaks, stretched their ugly little heads hungrily upward.

"That's so pretty!" cried the prince. "And you must see the old ones come to feed them."

The beautiful boy's sweet face fairly beamed with delight, and Charmian kissed him tenderly. Yet, even as she did so, she thought of the young swallows hacked to death in his mother's galley, and a chill ran through her veins.

Just at that moment voices were heard calling

Alexander from a neglected spot behind the dainty little house built for the children, and the boy exclaimed peevishly:

"There, now, I showed you the little nest, so I forgot. Agatha fell asleep and Smerdis went away, so we were alone. Then they sent me to Horus, the gate-keeper, to get some of his spelt bread. He never says no to anything, and it does taste so good. We're peasants, and have been using the axe and the hoe, so we want something to eat. Have you seen our house? We built it ourselves. Selene, Helios, Jotape, my future wife, and I—yes, I! They let me help, and we finished it alone, all alone! Everything is here. We shall build the shed for the cow to-morrow. The others mustn't see it, but I may show it to you."

While speaking, he drew her forward again, and Charmian obediently followed. The twins and little Jotape, who had been chosen for the future bride of the six-year-old Prince Alexander—a pretty, delicate, fair-haired child of his own age, the daughter of the Median king, who had been betrothed to the boy after the Parthian war, and now remained as a hostage at Cleopatra's court—welcomed her with joyous shouts. With the exception of the little Median princess, Charmian had witnessed their birth, and they all loved her dearly.

The little royal labourers showed their work with proud delight, and it really was well done.

They had toiled at it for weeks, paying no heed to the garden and all its costly rarities. They pointed with special pride to the two planks which Helios, aided by Alexander, had fished out of the sea after the last storm, when they were left alone, and to the lock on the door which they had secretly managed to wrench from an old gate. Selene herself had woven the curtain in front of the door. Now they were going to build a hearth too.

Charmian praised their skill, while they—all talking merrily together—told her how they had conquered the greatest difficulties. Their bright eyes sparkled with pleasure while describing the work of their own hands, and they were so absorbed in eager delight that they did not notice the approach of a man until startled by his words: "Enough of this idle sport now, your Highnesses. Too much time has already been wasted on it."

Then, turning to the Queen, who had accompanied him, he continued in a tone of apology: "This amusement might seem somewhat hazardous, yet there is much to be said in its favour. Besides, it appeared to afford the royal children so much pleasure that I permitted it for a short time. But if your Majesty commands——"

"Let them have their pleasure," the Queen interrupted kindly; and as soon as the children saw their mother they rushed forward, crowded around her with fearless love, thanked her, and eagerly assured her that nothing in the whole garden was

half so dear to them as their little house. They meant to build a stable too.

"That might be too much," said the tutor Euphronion, a grey-haired man with a shrewd, kindly face. "We must remember how many things are yet to be learned, that we may reach the goal fixed for your Majesty's birthday and pass the examination."

But all the children now joined in the entreaty to be allowed to build the stable too, and it was granted.

When the tutor at last began to lead them away, the royal mother stopped them, asking:

"Suppose, instead of this garden, I should give you a bit of bare land, such as the peasants till, where, after your lessons, you might dig and build as much as you please?"

Loud shouts of joy from the children answered the question; but the little Median girl, Jotape, said hesitatingly:

"Could I take my doll too—only the oldest, Atossa? She has lost one arm, yet I love her the best."

"Deprive us of anything you choose!" cried Helios, drawing little Alexander towards him, to show that they, the men, were of the same mind, "only give us some ground and let us build."

"We will consider whether it can be done," replied Cleopatra. "Perhaps, Euphronion, you

would be the right person—— But we will discuss the matter at a more quiet hour."

The tutor withdrew and the children, who followed, looked back, waving their hands and calling to their mother for a long time.

When they had disappeared behind the shrubbery in the garden Charmian exclaimed, "However dark the sky may be, so long as you possess these little ones you can never lack sunshine."

"If," replied Cleopatra, gazing pensively at the ground, "with a thought of them another did not blend which makes the gloom become deeper still. You know the tidings this terrible day has brought?"

"All," replied Charmian, sighing heavily.

"Then you know the abyss on whose verge we are walking; and to see them—them also dragged into the yawning gulf by their unhappy mother—O Charmian, Charmian!"

She sobbed aloud, threw her arms around the neck of her friend and playfellow, and laid her head upon her bosom like a child seeking consolation. Cleopatra wept for several minutes, and when she again raised her tear-stained face she said softly:

"That did me good! O, Charmian! no one needs love as I do. On your warm heart my own has already grown calmer."

"Use it, nestle there whenever you need it, to the end," cried Charmian, deeply moved.

"To the end," repeated Cleopatra, wiping her eyes. "It began to-day, I think. I have just spent an hour alone. I meant to commit a crime, and you know how impatiently passion sweeps me along. But what misfortunes have assailed me! The army destroyed; the desertion of Herod and Pinarius; Antony's generous, trusting heart torn by base treachery, his soul darkened; the reconstruction of the canal, the last hope—Gorgias brought the news —the same as destroyed. Just then little Alexander came to show me his bird's nest. Everything else in the garden seemed to him worthless by comparison. This awakened new thoughts, and now here is the little house which the children have built with their own hands. All these things forced me by some mysterious power to look back along the course of my life to the distant days in your father's house—I—— These children! Upon what different foundations our lives have been built! I made them begin at the point I had gained when youth lay behind me. *My* childhood commenced among the disorders of the government, clouded by my father's exile and my mother's death, on the brink of ruin. That of the twins—they are ten years old—will soon be over—and now, after enjoying pleasures not one of which was bestowed on me, they must endure the same sorrow. But did not we have better ones? What they daily possessed we only dreamed of in our simple garden. How often I let you share the radiant vis-

ions which my soul revealed to me! You willingly accompanied me into the splendid fairy world of my dreams. All that my imagination conjured up during the years of quiet and repose accompanied me into my after-life. Again and again I have beheld them, rich and powerful, upon the throne. The means of rendering the vision a verity were at hand; and when I met the man whose own life resembled the realization of a dream, I recalled those childish fancies and made them facts. The marvels with which I adorned my lover's existence were childish dreams to which I gave tangible form. This garden is an image of the life to which I intended to rise; in reality, fell. We collected within the limits of this bit of earth everything which can delight the senses; not a single one is omitted in this narrow space, whose crowded maze of pleasures fairly impede freedom of movement. Yet in your home, and guided by your wise father, I had learned to be content with so little, and commenced the struggle to attain peace. That painless peace—our chief good—whence came it? Through me it was lost to you both—— But the children—I made them begin their lives in an arena of every disturbing influence; and now I see how their own healthy natures yearn to escape from the dazzling wealth of colour, the stupefying fragrance, the bewildering songs and twittering. They long to return to the untilled earth, where the life of struggling mortals began.

The boy casts away the baubles, to test his own creative powers. The girl follows his example, and clings fast only to the doll in which she sees the living child, in order to do justice to the maternal instinct, the token of her sex. But what they so eagerly desire is right, and shall be granted. When I was ten years old, like the twins, my life and efforts were already directed towards one fixed goal. They are still blindly following the objects set before them. Let them return to the place whence their mother started, where she received everything good which is still hers. They shall go to the garden of Epicurus, no matter whether it is the old one in Kanopus or elsewhere. All that their mother beheld in vivid dreams, which she often strove with wanton extravagance to realize, has surrounded them from their birth and early satiated them. When they enter life, they will scorn what merely stirs and dazzles the senses, and cling to the aspiration for painless peace of mind, if a wise guide directs them and protects them from the dangers which the teachings of Epicurus contain for youth. I have found this guide, and you, too, will trust him—I mean your brother Archibius."

"Archibius?" asked Charmian in surprise.

"Yes, he who grew up in the garden of Epicurus, and in life and philosophy found the support which has preserved his peace of mind during all the conflicts of existence—he who loves the mother, and to whom the children are also dear—

he to whom the boys and girls cling with affectionate confidence. I wish to place the children under his protection and, if he will consent to grant this desire of the most hapless of women, I shall look forward calmly to the end. It is approaching! I feel, I know it! Gorgias is already at work upon the plan for my tomb."

"O my Queen!" cried Charmian sorrowfully. "Whatever may happen, your illustrious life cannot be in danger! The generous heart of Mark Antony does not throb in Octavianus's breast, but he is not cruel, and for the very reason that cool calculation curbs ambition he will spare you. He knows that you are the idol of the city, the whole country; and if he really succeeds in adding fresh victories to this first conquest, if the immortals permit your throne and—may they avert it!—your sacred person, too, to fall into his power——"

"Then," cried Cleopatra, her clear eyes flashing, "then he shall learn which of us two is the greater—then I shall know how to maintain the right to despise him, though blind Fate should make the whole power of the world subject to him who robbed my son and Cæsar's of his heritage!"

Her eyes had blazed with anger as she uttered the words; then, letting her little clenched hand fall, she went on in an altered tone:

"Months may pass before he is strong enough to risk the attack, and the immortals themselves approved the erection of the monument. The only

obstacle in the way, the house of the old philosopher Didymus, was destroyed. A messenger from Gorgias brought the news. It is to be the second monument in Alexandria worthy of notice. The other contains the body of the great Alexander, to whom the city owes its origin and name. He who subjected half the world to his power and the genius of the Greeks, was younger than I when he died. Whence do I, by whose miserable weakness the battle of Actium was lost, derive the right to walk longer beneath the sun? Perhaps Mark Antony will arrive in a few hours."

"And will you meet the disheartened hero in this mood?" interrupted Charmian.

"He does not wish to be received," answered Cleopatra bitterly. "He even refused to let me greet him, and I understand the denial. But what must have overwhelmed this joyous nature, so friendly to all mankind, that he longs for solitude and avoids meeting those who are nearest and dearest? Iras is now at the Choma—whither he wishes to retire—to see that everything is in order. She will also provide a supply of the flowers he loves. It is hard, cruelly hard, not to welcome him as usual. O Charmian, what joy it was when, with open arms and overflowing heart, he swung his mighty figure ashore like a youth, while his handsome, heroic face beamed with ardent love for me! And then—you do not forget it either—when he raised his deep voice to shout the first

greeting, why, it seemed as if the very fish in the water must join in, and the palm-trees on the shore wave their feathery tops in joyous sympathy. And here! The dreams of my childhood, which I made reality for him, received us, and our existence, wreathed with love and roses, became a fairy tale. Since the day he rode towards us at Kanopus and offered me the first bouquet, with his sunny glance wooing my love, his image has stood before my soul as the embodiment of the virile strength which conquers everything, and the bright, undimmed joy which renders the whole world happy. And now—now? Do you remember the dull dreamer whom we left ere he set forth for Parætonium? But no, no, a thousand times no, he must not remain so! Not with bowed head, but erect as in the days of happiness, must he cross the threshold of Hades, hand in hand with her whom he loved. And he does love me still. Else would he have followed me hither, though no magic goblet drew him after me? And I? The heart which, in the breast of the child, gave him its first young love, is still his, and will be forever. Might I not go to the harbour and await him there? Look me in the face, Charmian, and answer me as fearlessly as a mirror: did Olympus really succeed in effacing the wrinkles?"

"They were scarcely visible before," was the reply, "and even the keenest eye could no longer discover them. I have brought the pomade,

too, and the prescription Olympus gave me for——"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Cleopatra softly. "There are many living creatures in this garden, and they say that even the birds are good listeners."

A roguish smile deepened the dimples in her cheeks as she spoke, and delight in her bewitching grace forced from Charmian's lips the exclamation:

"If Mark Antony could only see you now!"

"Flatterer!" replied the Queen with a grateful smile. But Charmian felt that the time had now come to plead once more for Barine, and she began eagerly:

"No, I certainly do not flatter. No one in Alexandria, no matter what name she bears, could venture to vie even remotely with your charms. So cease the persecution of the unfortunate woman whom you confided to my care. It is an insult to Cleopatra——"

But here an indignant "Again!" interrupted her.

Cleopatra's face, which during the conversation had mirrored every emotion of a woman's soul, from the deepest sorrow to the most mischievous mirth, assumed an expression of repellent harshness, and, with the curt remark, "You are forgetting what I had good reason to forbid—I must go to my work," she turned her back upon the companion of her youth.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARMIAN went towards her own apartments. How often she had had a similar experience! In the midst of the warmest admiration for this rare woman's depth of feeling, masculine strength of intellect, tireless industry, watchful care for her native land, steadfast loyalty, and maternal devotion, she had been sobered in the most pitiable way.

She had been forced to see Cleopatra, for the sake of realizing a childish dream, and impressing her lover, squander vast sums, which diminished the prosperity of her subjects; place great and important matters below the vain, punctilious care of her own person; forget, in petty jealousy, the justice and kindness which were marked traits in her character; and, though the most kindly and womanly of sovereigns, suffer herself to be urged by angry excitement to inflict outrage on a subject whose acts had awakened her displeasure. The lofty ambition which had inspired her noblest and most praiseworthy deeds had more than once been the source of acts which she herself

regretted. When a child, she could not endure to be surpassed in difficult tasks, and still deemed it a necessity to be first and peerless. Hence the unfortunate circumstance that Antony had given Barine the counterpart of an armlet which she herself wore as a gift from her lover, was perhaps the principal cause of her bitter resentment against the hapless woman.

Charmian had seen Cleopatra forgive freely and generously many a wrong, nay, many an affront, inflicted upon her; but to see herself placed by her husband on the same plane as a Barine, even in the most trivial matter, might easily seem to her an unbearable insult; and the mishap which had befallen Cæsarion, in consequence of his foolish passion for the young beauty, gave her a right to punish her rival.

Deeply anxious concerning the fate of the woman in her care—greatly agitated, moreover, and exhausted physically and mentally—Charmian sought her own apartments.

Here she hoped to find solace in Barine's cheerful and equable nature; here the helpful hands of her dark-skinned maid and confidante awaited her.

The sun was low in the western horizon when she entered the anteroom. The members of the body-guard who were on duty told her that nothing unusual had occurred, and with a sigh of relief she passed into the sitting-room.

But the Ethiopian, who usually came to meet

her with words of welcome, took her veil and wraps, and removed her shoes, was absent. To-day no one greeted her. Not until she entered the second room, which she had assigned to her guest, did she find Barine, who was weeping bitterly.

During Charmian's absence the latter had received a letter from Alexas, in which he informed her that he was ordered by the Queen to subject her to an examination the next morning. Her cause looked dark but, if she did not render his duty harder by the harshness which had formerly caused him much pain, he would do his utmost to protect her from imprisonment, forced labour in the mines, or even worse misfortunes. The imprudent game which she had played with King Cæsarion had unfortunately roused the people against her. The depth of their indignation was shown by the fury with which they had assailed the house of her grandfather, Didymus. Nothing could save Dion, who had audaciously attacked the illustrious son of their beloved Queen, from the rage of the populace. He, Alexas, knew that in this Dion she would lose a friend and protector, but he would be disposed to take his place if her conduct did not render it impossible for him to unite mercy with justice.

This shameful letter, which promised Barine clemency in return for her favour without unmasking him in his character of judge, explained

to Charmian the agitation in which she found her friend's daughter.

It was doubtless a little relief to Barine to express her loathing and abhorrence of Alexas as eagerly as her gentle nature would permit, but fear, grief, and indignation continued to struggle for the mastery in her oppressed soul.

It would have been expected that the keen-witted woman would have eagerly inquired what Charmian had accomplished with the Queen and Archibius, and what new events had happened to affect Cleopatra, the state, and the city; but she questioned her with far deeper interest concerning the welfare of her lover, desiring information in regard to many things of which her friend could give no tidings. In her brief visit to Dion's couch she had not learned how he bore his own misfortunes and Barine's, what view he took of the future, or what he expected from the woman he loved.

Charmian's ignorance and silence in regard to these very matters increased the anxiety of the endangered woman, who saw not only her own life, but those dearest to her, seriously threatened. So she entreated her hostess to relieve her from the uncertainty which was harder to endure than the most terrible reality; but the latter either could not or would not give her any further details of Cleopatra's intentions, or the fate and present abode of her grandparents and Helena. This increased her anxiety, for if Alexas's infor-

mation was correct, her family must be homeless. When Charmian at last admitted that she had seen Dion only a few minutes, the tortured Barine's power of quiet endurance gave way.

She, whose nature was so hopeful that, when the glow of the sunset faded, she already anticipated with delight the rosy dawn of the next day, now beheld in Cleopatra's hand the reed which was to sign the death-sentence of Dion and herself. Her mental vision conjured up her relatives wounded by the falling house or bleeding under the stones hurled by the raging populace. She heard Alexas command the executioner to subject her to the rack, and fancied that Anukis had not returned because she had failed to find Dion. The Queen's soldiers had probably carried him to prison, loaded with chains, if Philostratus had not already instigated the mob to drag him through the streets.

With feverish impetuosity, which alarmed Charmian the more because it was so unlike her old friend's daughter, Barine described all the spectres with which her imagination—agitated by terror, longing, love, and loathing—terrified her ; but the former exerted all the power of eloquence she possessed, by turns reproving her and loading her with caresses, in order to soothe her and rouse her from her despair. But nothing availed. At last she succeeded in persuading the unhappy woman to go with her to the window, which afforded a most

beautiful view. Westward, beyond the Heptastadium, the sun was sinking below the forests of masts in the harbour of the Eunostus; and Charmian, who had learned from her intercourse with the royal children how to soothe a troubled young heart, to divert Barine's thoughts, directed her attention to the crimson glow in the western sky, and told her how her father, the artist, had showed her the superb brilliancy which colours gained at this hour of the day, even when the west was less radiant than now. But Barine, who usually could never gaze her fill at such a spectacle, did not thank her, for this sunset reminded her of another which she had lately watched at Dion's side, and she again broke into convulsive sobs.

Charmian, not knowing what to do, passed her arm around her. Just at that moment the door was hurriedly thrown open, and Anukis, the Nubian, entered.

Her mistress knew that something unusual must have happened to detain her so long from her post at Barine's side, and her appearance showed that she had been attending to important matters which had severely taxed her strength. Her shining dark skin looked ashen grey, her high forehead, surrounded by tangled woolly locks, was dripping with perspiration, and her thick lips were pale. Although she must have undergone great fatigue, she did not seem in need of rest; for, after greeting the ladies, apologizing for her long

absence, and telling Barine that this time Dion had seemed to her half on the way to recovery, a rapid side glance at her mistress conveyed an entreaty that she would follow her into the next room.

But the language of the Nubian's eyes had not escaped the suspicious watchfulness of the anxious Barine and, overwhelmed with fresh terror, she begged that she might hear all.

Charmian ordered her maid to speak openly; but Anukis, ere she began, assured them that she had received the news she brought from a most trustworthy source—only it would make a heavy demand upon the resolution and courage of Barine, whom she had hoped to find in a very different mood. There was no time to lose. She was expected at the appointed place an hour after sunset.

Here Charmian interrupted the maid with the exclamation "Impossible!" and reminded her of the guards which Alexas, aided by Iras, who was thoroughly familiar with the palace, had stationed the day before in the anteroom, at all the doors—nay, even beneath the windows.

The Nubian replied that everything had been considered; but, to gain time, she must beg Barine to let her colour her skin and curl her hair while she was talking.

The surprise visible in the young beauty's face caused her to exclaim: "Only act with entire confidence. You shall learn everything directly.

There is so much to tell! On the way here I had planned how to relate the whole story in regular order, but it can't be done now. No, no! Whoever wants to save a flock of sheep from a burning shed must lead out the bell-wether first —the main thing, I mean—so I will begin with that, though it really comes last. The explanation of how all this——"

Here, like a cry of joy, Barine's exclamation interrupted her:

"I am to fly, and Dion knows it and will follow me! I see it in your face."

In fact, every feature of the dusky maid-servant's ugly face betrayed that pleasant thoughts were agitating her mind. Her black eyes flashed with fearless daring, and a smile beautified her big mouth and thick lips as she replied:

"A loving heart like yours understands the art of prophecy better than the chief priest of the great Serapis. Yes, my young mistress, he of whom you speak must disappear from this wicked city where so much evil threatens you both. He will certainly escape and, if the immortals aid us and we are wise and brave, you also. Whence the help comes can be told later. Now, the first thing is to transform you—don't be reluctant—into the ugliest woman in the world—black Anukis. You must escape from the palace in this disguise.—Now you know the whole plan, and while I get what is necessary from my chest of clothes, I beg you,

mistress, to consider how we are to obtain the black stains for that ivory skin and golden hair."

With these words she left the room, but Barine flung herself into her friend's arms, exclaiming, amid tears and laughter: "Though I should be forced to remain forever as black and crooked as faithful Aisopion, if he did not withdraw his love, though I were obliged to go through fire and water—I would—— O Charmian! what changes so quickly as joy and sorrow? I would fain show some kindness to every one in the world, even to your Queen, who has brought all these troubles upon me."

The new-born hope had transformed the despairing woman into a happy one, and Charmian perceived it with grateful joy, secretly wishing that Cleopatra had listened to her appeal.

While examining the hair-dyes used by the Queen she saw, lurking in the background of what was still unexplained, and therefore confused her mind, fresh and serious perils. Barine, on the contrary, gazed across them to the anticipated meeting with her lover, and was full of the gayest expectation until the maid-servant's return.

The work of disfigurement began without delay. Anukis moved her lips as busily as her hands, and described in regular order all that had befallen her during the eventful day.

Barine listened with rising excitement, and her

joy increased as she beheld the path which had been smoothed for her by the care and wisdom of her friends. Charmian, on the contrary, became graver and more quiet the more distinctly she perceived the danger her favourite must encounter. Yet she could not help admitting that it would be a sin against Barine's safety, perhaps her very life, to withhold her from this well-considered plan of escape.

That it must be tried was certain; but as the moment which was to endanger the woman she loved drew nearer, and she could not help saying to herself that she was aiding an enterprise in opposition to the express command of the Queen and helping to execute a plan which threatened to rouse the indignation, perhaps the fury, of Cleopatra, a feeling of sorrow overpowered her. She feared nothing for herself. Not for a single instant did she think of the unpleasant consequences which Barine's escape might draw upon her. The burden on her soul was due only to the consciousness of having, for the first time, opposed the will of the sovereign, to fulfil whose desires and to promote whose aims had been the beloved duty of her life. Doubtless the thought crossed her mind that, by aiding Barine's escape, she was guarding Cleopatra from future repentance; probably she felt sure that it was her duty to help rescue this beautiful young life, whose bloom had been so cruelly assailed by tempest and hoar-frost, and which now

had a prospect of the purest happiness; yet, though in itself commendable, the deed brought her into sharp conflict with the loftiest aims and aspirations of her life. And how much nearer than the other was the woman—she shrank from the word—whom she was about to betray, how much greater was Cleopatra's claim to her love and gratitude! Could she have any other emotion than thankfulness if the plan of escape succeeded? Yet she was reluctant to perform the task of making Barine's beautiful, symmetrical figure resemble the hunch-backed Nubian's, or to dip her fingers into the pomade intended for Cleopatra; and it grieved her to mar the beauty of Barine's luxuriant tresses by cutting off part of her thick fair braids.

True, these things could not be avoided, if the flight was to succeed, and the further Anukis advanced in her story, the fewer became her mistress's objections to the plan.

The conversation between Iras and Alexas, which had been overheard by the maid, already made it appear necessary to withdraw Barine and her lover from the power of such foes. The faithful man whom Anukis had found with Dion, whose name she did not mention and of whose home she said only that no safer hiding-place could be found, even by the mole which burrowed in the earth, really seemed to have been sent with Gorgias to Dion's couch by Fate itself. The control of the subterranean chambers in the Temple of Isis which

had been bestowed on the architect, also appeared like a miracle.

Upon a small tablet, which the wise Aisopion had intentionally delayed handing to her mistress until now, were the lines :

" Archibius greets his sister Charmian. If I know your heart, it will be as hard for you as for me to share this plot, yet it must be done for the sake of her father, to save the life and happiness of his child. So it must fall to your lot to bring Barine to the Temple of Isis at the Corner of the Muses. She will find her lover there and, if possible, be wedded to him. As the sanctuary is so near, you need leave the palace only a short time. Do not tell Barine what we have planned. The disappointment would be too great if it should prove impracticable."

This letter and the arrangement it proposed transformed the serious scruples which shadowed Charmian's good-will into a joyous, nay, enthusiastic desire to render assistance. Barine's marriage to the man who possessed her heart was close at hand, and she was the daughter of Leonax, who had once been dear to her. Fear and doubt vanished as if scattered to the four winds, and when Aisopion's work of transformation was completed and Barine stood before her as the high-shouldered, dark-visaged, wrinkled maid, she could not help admitting that it would be easy to escape from the palace in that disguise.

She now told Barine that she intended to accompany her herself; and though the former's stained face forced her to refrain from kissing her friend, she plainly expressed to her and the faithful freedwoman the overflowing gratitude which filled her heart.

Anukis was left alone. After carefully removing all the traces of her occupation, as habit dictated, she raised her arms in prayer, beseeching the gods of her native land to protect the beautiful woman to whom she had loaned her own misshapen form, which had now been of genuine service, and who had gone forth to meet so many dangers, but also a happiness whose very hope had been denied to her.

Charmian had told her maid that if the Queen should inquire for her before Iras returned from the Choma to say that she had been obliged to leave the palace, and to supply her place. During their absence, when Charmian had been attacked by sickness, Cleopatra had often entrusted the care of her toilet to Aisopion, and had praised her skill.

The Queen's confidential attendant was followed as usual when she went out by a dark-skinned maid. Lanterns and lamps had already been lighted in the corridors of the spacious palace, and the court-yards were ablaze with torches and pitch-pans; but, brilliantly as they burned in many places, and numerous as were the guards, officers, eunuchs, clerks, soldiers, cooks, attend-

ants, slaves, door-keepers, and messengers whom they passed, not one gave them more than a careless glance.

So they reached the last court-yard, and then came a moment when the hearts of both women seemed to stop beating—for the man whom they had most cause to dread, Alexas the Syrian, approached.

And he did not pass the fugitives, but stopped Charmian, and courteously, even obsequiously, informed her that he wished to get rid of the troublesome affair of her favourite, which had been assigned to him against his will, and therefore had determined to bring Barine to trial early the following morning.

The Syrian's body-servant attended his master, and while the former was talking with Charmian the latter turned to the supposed Nubian, tapped her lightly on the shoulder, and whispered: "Come this evening, as you did yesterday. You haven't finished the story of Prince Setnau."

The fugitive felt as if she had grown dumb and could never more regain the power of speech. Yet she managed to nod, and directly after the favourite bowed a farewell to Charmian. The Ligurian was obliged to follow his master, while Charmian and Barine passed through the gateway between the last pylons into the open air.

Here the sea-breeze seemed to waft her a joyous greeting from the realm of liberty and hap-

piness, and the timid woman, amid all the perils which surrounded her, regained sufficient presence of mind to tell her friend what Alexas's slave had whispered—that Aisopion might remind him of it the same evening, and thus strengthen his belief that the Nubian had accompanied the Queen's confidante.

The way to the Temple of Isis was short. The stars showed that they would reach their destination in time; but a second delay unexpectedly occurred. From the steps leading to the cella of the sanctuary a procession, whose length seemed endless, came towards them. At the head of the train marched eight pastophori, bearing the image of Isis. Then came the basket-bearers of the goddess with several other priestesses, followed by the reader with an open book-roll. Behind him appeared the quaternary number of prophets, whose head, the chief priest, moved with stately dignity beneath a canopy. The rest of the priestly train bore in their hands manuscripts, sacred vessels, standards, and wreaths. The priestesses—some of whom, with garlands on their flowing hair, were already shaking the sistrum of Isis—mingled with the line of priests, their high voices blending with the deep notes of the men. Neokori, or temple servants, and a large number of worshippers of Isis, closed the procession, all wearing wreaths and carrying flowers. Torch and lantern bearers lighted the way, and the perfume of the incense

rising from the little pan of charcoal in the hand of a bronze arm, which the pastophori waved to and fro, surrounded and floated after the procession.

The two women waiting for the train to pass saw it turn towards Lochias, and the conversation of the bystanders informed them that its object was to convey to "the new Isis," the Queen, the greeting of the goddess, and assure the sovereign of the divinity's remembrance of her in the hour of peril.

Cleopatra could not help accepting this friendly homage, and it was incumbent upon her to receive it wearing on her head the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, and robed in all the ecclesiastical vestments which only her two most trusted attendants knew how to put on with the attention to details that custom required. This had never been entrusted to maids of inferior position like the Nubian; so Cleopatra would miss Charmian.

The thought filled her with fresh uneasiness and, when the steps were at last free, she asked herself anxiously how all this would end.

It seemed as if the fugitive and her companion had exposed themselves to this great peril in vain; for some of the temple servants were forcing back those who wished to enter the sanctuary, shouting that it would be closed until the return of the procession. Barine gazed timidly into Charmian's face; but, ere she could express her opinion, the

tall figure of a man appeared on the temple steps. It was Archibius, who with grave composure bade them follow him, and silently led them around the sanctuary to a side door, through which, a short time before, a litter had passed, accompanied by several attendants.

Ascending a flight of steps within the long building, they reached the dimly lighted cella.

As in the Temple of Osiris at Abydos seven corridors, here three led to the same number of apartments, the holy place of the sanctuary. The central one was dedicated to Isis, that on the left to her husband Osiris, and that on the right to Horus, the son of the great goddess. Before it, scarcely visible in the dim light, stood the altars, loaded with sacrifices by Archibius.

Beside that of Horus was the litter which had been borne into the temple before the arrival of the women. From it, supported by two friends, descended a slender young man.

A hollow sound echoed through the pillared hall. The iron door at the main entrance of the temple had been closed. The shrill rattle that followed proceeded from the metal bolts which an old servant of the sanctuary had shot into the sockets.

Barine started, but neither inquired the cause of the noise nor perceived the wealth of objects here presented to the senses; for the man who, leaning on another's arm, approached the altar, was Dion, the lover who had perilled his life for her sake. Her

eyes rested intently on his figure, her whole heart yearned towards him and, unable to control herself, she called his name aloud.

Charmian gazed anxiously around the group, but soon uttered a sigh of relief; for the tall man whose arm supported Dion was Gŏrgias, the worthy architect, his best friend, and the other, still taller and stronger, her own brother Archibius. Yonder figure, emerging from the disguise of wraps, was Berenike, Barine's mother. All trustworthy confidants! The only person whom she did not know was the handsome young man standing at her brother's side.

Barine, whose arm she still held, had struggled to escape to rush to her mother and lover; but Archibius had approached, and in a whisper warned her to be patient and to refrain from any greeting or question, "supposing," he added, "that you are willing to be married at this altar to Dion, the son of Eumenes."

Charmian felt Barine's arm tremble in hers at this suggestion, but the young beauty obeyed her friend's directions. She did not know what had befallen her, or whether, in the excess of happiness which overwhelmed her, to shout aloud in her exultant joy, or melt into silent tears of gratitude and emotion.

No one spoke. Archibius took a roll of manuscript from Dion's hand, presented himself before the assembled company as the bride's kyrios, or

guardian, and asked Barine whether she so recognized him. Then he returned to Dion the marriage contract, whose contents he knew and approved, and informed those present that, in the marriage about to be solemnized, they must consider him the paranymphos, or best man, and Berenike as the bridesmaid, and they instantly lighted a torch at the fires burning on one of the altars. Archibius, as kyrios, joined the lovers' hands in the Egyptian—Barine's mother, as bridesmaid, in the Greek—manner, and Dion gave his bride a plain iron ring. It was the same one which his father had bestowed at his own wedding, and he whispered: "My mother valued it; now it is your turn to honour the ancient treasure."

After stating that the necessary sacrifices had been offered to Isis and Serapis, Zeus, Hera, and Artemis, and that the marriage between Dion, son of Eumenes, and Barine, daughter of Leonax, was concluded, Archibius shook hands with both.

Haste seemed necessary, for he permitted Berenike and his sister only time for a brief embrace, and Gorgias to clasp her hand and Dion's. Then he beckoned, and the newly made bride's mother followed him in tears, Charmian bewildered and almost stupefied. She did not fully realize the meaning of the event she had just witnessed until an old neokori had guided her and the others into the open air.

Barine felt as if every moment might rouse

her from a blissful dream, and yet she gladly told herself that she was awake, for the man walking before her, leaning on the arm of a friend, was Dion. True, she saw, even in the faint light of the dim temple corridor, that he was suffering. Walking appeared to be so difficult that she rejoiced when, yielding to Gorgias's entreaties, he entered the litter.

But where were the bearers?

She was soon to learn; for, even while she looked for them, the architect and the youth, in whom she had long since recognized Philotas, her grandfather's assistant, seized the poles.

"Follow us," said Gorgias, under his breath, and she obeyed, keeping close behind the litter, which was borne first down a broad and then a narrow staircase, and finally along a passage. Here a door stopped the fugitives; but the architect opened it and helped his friend out of the litter, which before prceeding farther he placed in a room filled with various articles discovered during his investigation of the subterranean temple chambers.

Hitherto not a word had been spoken. Now Gorgias called to Barine: "This passage is low—you must stoop. Cover your head, and don't be afraid if you meet bats. They have long been undisturbed. We might have taken you from the temple to the sea, and waited there, but it would probably have attracted attention and been danger-

ous. Courage, young wife of Dion! The corridor is long, and walking through it is difficult; but compared with the road to the mines, it is as smooth and easy as the Street of the King. If you think of your destination, the bats will seem like the swallows which announce the approach of spring."

Barine nodded gratefully to him; but she kissed the hand of Dion, who was moving forward painfully, leaning on the arm of his friend. The light of the torch carried by Gorgias's faithful foreman, who led the way, had fallen on her blackened arm, and when the little party advanced she kept behind the others. She thought it might be unpleasant for her lover to see her thus disfigured, and spared him, though she would gladly have remained nearer. As soon as the passage grew lower, the wounded man's friends took him in their arms, and their task was a hard one, for they were not only obliged to move onward bending low under the heavy burden, but also to beat off the bats which, frightened by the foreman's torch, flew up in hosts.

Barine's hair was covered, it is true, but at any other time the hideous creatures, which often brushed against her head and arms, would have filled her with horror and loathing. Now she scarcely heeded them; her eyes were fixed on the recumbent figure in the bearers' arms, the man to whom she belonged, body and soul, and whose patient suffering pierced her inmost heart. His

head rested on the breast of Gorgias, who walked directly in front of her; the architect's stooping posture concealed his face, but his feet were visible and, whenever they twitched, she fancied he was in pain. Then she longed to press forward to his side, wipe the perspiration from his brow in the hot, low corridor, and whisper words of love and encouragement.

This she was sometimes permitted to do when the friends put down their heavy burden. True, they allowed themselves only brief intervals of rest, but they were long enough to show her how the sufferer's strength was failing. When they at last reached their destination, Philotas was forced to exert all his strength to support the exhausted man, while Gorgias cautiously opened the door. It led to a flight of sea-washed steps close to the garden of Didymus, which as a child she had often used with her brother to float a little boat upon the water.

The architect opened the door only a short distance; he was expected, for Barine soon heard him whisper, and suddenly the door was flung wide. A tall man raised Dion and bore him into the open air. While she was still gazing after him, a second figure of equal size approached her and, hastily begging her permission, lifted her in his arms like a child, and as she inhaled the cool night air and felt the water through which her bearer waded splash up and wet her feet, her eyes sought her new-made

husband—but in vain; the night was very dark, and the lights on the shore did not reach this spot so far below the walls of the quay.

Barine was frightened; but a few minutes after the outlines of a large fishing boat loomed through the darkness, dimly illumined by the harbour lights, and the next instant the giant who carried her placed her on the deck, and a deep voice whispered: "All's well. I'll bring some wine at once."

Then Barine saw her husband lying motionless on a couch which had been prepared for him in the prow of the boat. Bending over him, she perceived that he had fainted, and while rubbing his forehead with the wine, raising his head on her lap, cheering him, and afterwards by the light of a small lantern carefully renewing the bandage on his shoulder, she did not notice that the vessel was moving through the water until the boatman set the triangular sail.

She had not been told where the boat was bearing her, and she did not ask. Any spot that she could share with Dion was welcome. The more lonely the place, the more she could be to him. How her heart swelled with gratitude and love! When she bent over him, kissed his forehead, and felt how feverishly it burned, she thought, "I will nurse you back to health," and raised her eyes and soul to her favourite god, to whom she owed the gift of song, and who understood everything beautiful and pure, to thank

Phœbus Apollo and beseech him to pour his rays the next morning on a convalescent man. While she was still engaged in prayer the boat touched the shore. Again strong arms bore her and Dion to the land, and when her foot touched the solid earth, her rescuer, the freedman Pyrrhus, broke the silence, saying: "Welcome, wife of Dion, to our island! True, you must be satisfied to take us as we are. But if you are as content with us as we are glad to serve you and your lord, who is ours also, the hour of leave-taking will be far distant."

Then, leading the way to the house, he showed her as her future apartments two large white-washed rooms, whose sole ornament was their exquisite neatness.

On the threshold stood Pyrrhus's grey-haired wife, a young woman, and a girl scarcely beyond childhood; but the older one modestly welcomed Barine, and also begged her to accept their hospitality. Recovery was rapid in the pure air of the Serpent Isle. She herself, and—she pointed to the others—her oldest son's wife, and her own daughter, Dione, would be ready to render her any service.

CHAPTER XVI.

Brothers and sisters are rarely talkative when they are together. As Charmian went to Lochias with Archibius, it was difficult for her to find words, the events of the past few hours had agitated her so deeply. Archibius, too, could not succeed in turning his thoughts in any other direction, though important and far more momentous things claimed his attention.

They walked on silently side by side. In reply to his sister's inquiry where the newly wedded pair were to be concealed, he had answered that, spite of her trustworthiness, this must remain a secret. To her second query, how had it been possible to use the interior of the Temple of Isis without interruption, he also made a guarded reply.

In fact, it was the control of the subterranean corridors of the sanctuary which had suggested to Gorgias the idea of carrying Dion through them to Pyrrhus's fishing-boat. To accomplish this it was only necessary to have the Temple of Isis, which usually remained open day and night, left to the fugitive's friends for a short time; and this was successfully managed.

The historian Timagenes, who had come from Rome as ambassador and claimed the hospitality of his former pupil Archibius, had been empowered to offer Cleopatra recognition of her own and her children's right to the throne, and a full pardon, if she would deliver Mark Antony into the hands of Octavianus, or have him put to death.

The Alexandrian Timagenes considered this demand both just and desirable, because it promised to deliver his native city from the man whose despotic arrogance menaced its freedom, and whose lavish generosity and boundless love of splendour diminished its wealth. To Rome, as whose representative the historian appeared, this man's mere existence meant constant turmoil and civil war. At the restoration of the flute-player by Gabinius and Mark Antony, Timagenes had been carried into slavery. Later, when, after his freedom had been purchased by the son of Sulla, he succeeded in attaining great influence in Rome, he still remained hostile to Mark Antony, and it had been a welcome charge to work against him in Alexandria. He hoped to find an ally in Archibius, whose loyal devotion to the Queen he knew. Arius, Barine's uncle and Octavianus's former tutor, would also aid him. The most powerful support of his mission, however, could be rendered by the venerable chief priest, the head of the whole Egyptian hierarchy. He had shown the latter that Antony, in any case, was a lost man, and Egypt was in the

act of dropping like a ripe fruit into the lap of Octavianus. It would soon be in his power to give the country whatever degree of liberty and independence he might choose. The Cæsar had the sole disposal of the Queen's fate also, and whoever desired to see her remain on the throne must strive to gain the good-will of Octavianus.

The wise Anubis had considered all these things, but he owed to Timagenes the hint that Arius was the man whom Octavianus most trusted. So the august prelate secretly entered into communication with Barine's uncle. But the dignity of his high office, and the feebleness of extreme age, forbade Anubis to seek the man who was suspected of friendship for the Romans. He had therefore sent his trusted secretary, the young Serapion, to make a compact as his representative with the friend of Octavianus, whose severe injuries prevented his leaving the house to go to the chief priest.

During Timagenes's negotiations with the secretary and Arius, Archibius came to entreat Barine's uncle to do everything in his power to save his niece; and, as all the Queen's friends were anxious to prevent an act which, in these times of excitement, could not fail, on account of its connection with Dion, a member of the Council, to rouse a large number of the citizens against her, Serapion, as soon as he was made aware of the matter, eagerly protested his readiness to do his

best to save the imperilled lovers. He cared nothing for Barine or Dion as individuals, but he doubtless would have been ready to make a still greater sacrifice to win the influential Archibius, and especially Arius, who would have great power through Octavianus, the rising sun.

The men had just begun to discuss plans for saving Barine, when the Nubian appeared and told Archibius what had been arranged beside Dion's sick-bed by the freedman and Gorgias. The escape of the fugitives depended solely upon their reaching the boat unseen, and the surest way to accomplish this was to use the subterranean passage which the architect had again opened.

Archibius, to whom the representative of the chief priest had offered his aid, now took the others into his confidence, and Arius proposed that Barine should marry Dion in the Temple of Isis, and the couple should afterwards be guided through the secret passage to the boat. This proposal was approved, and Serapion promised to reserve the sanctuary for the wedding of the fugitives for a short time after the departure of the procession, which was to take place at sunset. In return for this service another might perhaps soon be requested from the friend of Octavianus, who greeted his promise with grateful warmth.

"The priesthood," said Serapion, "takes sides with all who are unjustly persecuted, and in this case bestows aid the more willingly on account of

its great anxiety to guard the Queen from an act which would be difficult to approve." As for the fugitives, so far as he could see, only two possibilities were open to them: Cleopatra would cleave to Mark Antony and go—would that the immortals might avert it!—to ruin, or she would sacrifice him and save her throne and life. In both cases the endangered lovers could soon return uninjured—the Queen had a merciful heart, and never retained anger long if no guilt existed.

The details of the plan were then settled by Archibius, Anukis, and Berenike, who was with the family of Arius, and the decision was communicated to the architect. Archibius had maintained the same silence concerning the destination of the fugitives towards the men composing the council and Barine's mother as to his sister. With regard to the mission of Timagenes and the political questions which occupied his mind, he gave Charmian only the degree of information necessary to explain the plan she so lovingly promoted; but she had no desire to know more. On the way home her mind was wholly absorbed by the fear that Cleopatra had missed her services and discovered Barine's flight. True, she mentioned the Queen's desire to place her children in Archibius's charge, but she could not give him full particulars until she reached her own apartments.

Her absence had not been noticed. The Regent Mardion had received the procession in the

Queen's name, for Cleopatra had driven into the city, no one knew where.

Charmian entered her apartments with a lighter heart. Anukis opened the door to them. She had remained undisturbed, and it was a pleasure to Archibius to give the faithful, clever freedwoman an account of the matter with his own lips. He could have bestowed no richer reward upon the modest servant, who listened to his words as if they were a revelation. When she disclaimed the thanks with which he concluded, protesting that she was the person under obligation, the expression was sincere. Her keen intellect instantly recognized the aristocrat's manner of addressing an equal or an inferior; and he who, in her eyes, was the first of men, had described the course of events as though she had stood on the same level. The Queen herself might have been satisfied with the report.

When she left Charmian's rooms to join the other servants, she told herself that she was an especially favoured mortal; and when a young cook teased her about her head being sunk between her shoulders, she answered, laughing: "My shoulders have grown so high because I shrug them so often at the fools who jeer at me and yet are not half so happy and grateful."

Charmian, sorely wearied, had flung herself into an arm-chair, and Archibius took his place opposite to her. They were happy in each other's

society, even when silent; but to-day the hearts of both were so full that they fared like those who are so worn out by fatigue that they cannot sleep. How much they had to tell each other!—yet it was long ere Charmian broke the silence and returned to the subject of the Queen's wish, describing to her brother Cleopatra's visit to the house which the children had built, how kind and cordial she had been; yet, a few minutes later, incensed by the mere mention of Barine's name, she had dismissed her so ungraciously.

"I do not know what you intend," she said in conclusion, "but, notwithstanding my love for her, I must perhaps decide in favour of what is most difficult, for—when she learns that it was I who withdrew the daughter of Leonax from her and the base Alexas—what treatment can I expect, especially as Iras no longer gives me the same affection, and shows that she has forgotten my love and care? This will increase, and the worst of the matter is, that if the Queen begins to favour her, I cannot justly reproach her, for Iras is keener-witted, and has a more active brain. Statecraft was always odious to me. Iras, on the contrary, is delighted with the opportunity to speak on subjects connected with the government of the country, and especially the ceaseless, momentous game with Rome and the men who guide her destiny."

"That game is lost," Archibius broke in with

so much earnestness that Charmian started, repeating in a low, timid tone:

"Lost?"

"Forever," said Archibius, "unless——"

"The Olympians be praised—that there is still a doubt."

"Unless Cleopatra can decide to commit an act which will force her to be faithless to herself, and destroy her noble image through all future generations."

"How?"

"Whenever you learn it, will be too soon."

"And suppose she should do it, Archibius? You are her most trusted confidant. She will place in your charge what she loves more than she does herself."

"More? You mean, I suppose, the children?"

"The children! Yes, a hundred times yes. She loves them better than aught else on earth. For them, believe me, she would be ready to go to her death."

"Let us hope so."

"And you—were she to commit the horrible deed—I can only suspect what it is. But should she descend from the height which she has hitherto occupied—would you still be ready——"

"With me," he interrupted quietly, "what she does or does not do matters nothing. She is unhappy and will be plunged deeper and deeper into misery. I know this, and it constrains me to

exert my utmost powers in her service. I am hers as the hermit consecrated to Serapis belongs to the god. His every thought must be devoted to him. To the deity who created him he dedicates body and soul until the death to which he dooms him. The bonds which unite me to this woman—you know their origin—are not less indestructible. Whatever she desires whose fulfilment will not force me to despise myself is granted in advance."

"She will never require such things from the friend of her childhood," cried Charmian. Then, approaching him with both arms extended joyfully, she exclaimed: "Thus you ought to speak and feel, and therein is the answer to the question which has agitated my soul since yesterday. Barine's flight, the favour and disfavour of Cleopatra, Iras, my poor head, which abhors politics, while at this time the Queen needs keen-sighted confidants——"

"By no means," her brother interrupted. "It is for men alone to give counsel in these matters. Accursed be women's gossip over their toilet tables! It has already scattered to the four winds many a well-considered plan of the wisest heads, and an Iras could never be more fatal to statecraft than just at the present moment, had not Fate already uttered the final verdict."

"Then hence with these scruples," cried Charmian eagerly; "my doubts are at an end! As usual, you point out the right path. I had thought of returning to the country estate we call Irenia—the

abode of peace—or to our beloved little palace at Kanopus, to spend the years which may still be allotted to me, and return to everything that made my childhood beautiful. The philosophers, the flowers in the garden, the poets—even the new Roman ones, of whose works Timagenes sent us such charming specimens—would enliven the solitude. The child, the daughter of the man whose love I renounced, and afterwards perhaps her sons and daughters, would fill the place of my own. As they would have been dear to Leonax, I, too, would have loved them! This is the guise in which the future has appeared to me in many a quiet hour. But shall Charmian—who, when her heart throbbed still more warmly and life lay fair before her, laid her first love upon the altar of sacrifice for her royal playfellow—abandon Cleopatra in misfortune from mere selfish scruples? No, no!—Like you, I too belong—come what may—to the Queen."

She gazed into her brother's face, sure of his approval but, waving his uplifted hand, he answered gravely: "No, Charmian! What I, a man, can assume, might be fatal to you, a woman. The present is not sweet enough for me to embitter it with wormwood from the future. And yet—— You must cast one glance into its gloomy domain, in order to understand me. You can be silent, and what you now learn will be a secret between us. Only one thing"—here he lowered the loud tones of his deep voice—"only one thing can save

her: the murder of Antony, or an act of shameless treachery which would deliver him into Octavianus's power. This is the proposal Timagenes brought."

"This?" she asked in a hollow tone, her grey head drooping.

"This," he repeated firmly. "And if she succumbs to the temptation, she will be faithless to the love which has coursed through her whole life as the Nile flows through the land of her ancestors. Then, Charmian, stay, stay under any circumstances, cling to her more firmly than ever, for then, then, my sister, she will be more wretched—ten, a hundred fold more wretched than if Octavianus deprives her of everything, perhaps even life itself."

"Nor will I leave her, come what may. I will remain at her side until the end," cried Charmian eagerly. But Archibius, without noticing the enthusiastic ardor, so unusual to his sister's quiet nature, calmly continued: "She won your heart also, and it seems impossible for you to desert her. Many have shared our feelings; and it is no disgrace to any one. Misfortune is a weapon which cleaves base natures like a sword, yet like a hammer welds noble ones more closely. To you, therefore, it now seems doubly difficult to leave her, but you need love. The right to live and guard yourself from the most pitiable retrogression is your due, as much as that of the rare woman on the throne. So long as you are sure of her love, remain

with her, and show your devotion in every situation until the end. But the motives which were drawing you away to books, flowers, and children, weigh heavily in the balance, and if you lack the anchor of her favour and love, I shall see you perish miserably. The frost emanating from Cleopatra, if her heart grew cold to you, the pin-pricks with which Iras would assail you, were you defenceless, would kill you. This must not be, sister; we will guard against it—— Do not interrupt me. The counsel I advise you to follow has been duly weighed. If you see that the Queen still loves you as in former days, cling to her; but should you learn the contrary, bid her farewell to-morrow. My Irenia is yours——"

"But she *does* love me, and even should she no longer——"

"The test is at hand. We will leave the decision to her. You shall confess that you were the culprit who aided Barine to escape her power to punish."

"Archibius!"

"If you did not, a series of falsehoods must ensue. Try whether the petty qualities in her nature, which urged her to commit the fate of Leonax's daughter to unworthy hands, are more powerful than the nobler ones. Try whether she is worthy of the self-sacrificing fidelity which you have given her all your life. If she remains the same as before, spite of this admission——"

Here he was interrupted by Anukis, who asked if her mistress would see Iras at this late hour.

"Admit her," replied Archibius, after hastily exchanging glances with his sister, whose face had paled at his demand. He perceived it and, as the servant withdrew, he clasped her hand, saying with earnest affection: "I gave you my opinion, but at our age we must take counsel with ourselves, and you will find the right path."

"I have already found it," she answered softly with downcast eyes. "This visitor brought a speedy decision. I must not feel ashamed in Iras's presence."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the Queen's younger confidante entered. She was excited and, after casting a searching glance around the familiar room, she asked, after a curt greeting: "No one knows where the Queen has gone. Mardion received the procession in her place. Did she take you into her confidence?"

Charmian answered in the negative, and inquired whether Antony had arrived, and how she had found him.

"In a pitiable state," was the reply. "I hastened hither to prevent the Queen from visiting him, if possible. She would have received a rebuff. It is horrible."

"The disappointment of Parætonium is added to the other burdens," observed Archibius.

"A feather compared with the rest," cried Iras

indignantly. "What a spectacle! A shrivelled soul, never too large, in the body of a powerful giant. Disaster crushes the courage of the descendant of Herakles. The weakling will drag the Queen's splendid courage with him into the dust."

"We will do our best to prevent it," replied Archibius firmly. "The immortals have placed you and Charmian at her side to sustain her, if her own strength fails. The time to test your powers has arrived."

"I know my duty," replied Iras austerely.

"Prove it!" said Archibius earnestly. "You think you have cause for anger against Charmian."

"Whoever treats my foes so tenderly can doubtless dispense with my affection. Where is your ward?"

"That you shall learn later," replied Charmian advancing. "But when you do know, you will have still better reason to doubt my love; yet it was only to save one dear to me from misery, certainly not to grieve you, that I stepped between you and Barine. And now let me say—had you wounded me to the quick, and everything dear to the Greek heart called to me for vengeance—I should impose upon myself whatever constraint might be necessary to deny the impulse, because this breast contains a love stronger, more powerful, than the fiercest hate. And this love we both share. Hate me, strive to wound and injure one at

whose side you have hitherto stood like a daughter, but beware of robbing me of the strength and freedom which I need, to be and to offer to my royal mistress all the assistance in my power. I have just been consulting my brother about leaving Cleopatra's service."

"Now?" Iras broke in vehemently. "No, no! Not that! It must not be! She cannot spare you now."

"More easily, perhaps, than you," replied Charmian; "yet in many things my services might be hard to replace."

"Nothing under the sun *could* do it," cried Iras eagerly. "If, in these days of trouble, she should lose you too——"

"Still darker ones are approaching," interrupted Archibius positively. "Perhaps you will learn all to-morrow. Whether Charmian yields to her desire for rest, or continues in the service of the Queen, depends on you. If you wish her to remain you must not render it too hard for her to do so. We three, my child, are perhaps the only persons at this court to whom the Queen's happiness is more than their own, and therefore we should permit no incident, whatever name it may bear, to cloud our harmony."

Iras threw back her head with angry pride, exclaiming passionately: "Was it I who injured you? I do not know in what respect. But you and Charmian—though you have so long been

aware that this heart was closed against every love save one—stepped between me and the man for whom I have yearned since childhood, and built the bridge which united Dion and Barine. I held the woman I hated in my grasp, and thanked the immortals for the boon; but you two—it is not difficult to guess the secret you are still trying to keep from me—you aided her to escape. You have robbed me of my revenge; you have again placed the singer in the path where she must find the man to whom I have a better and older claim, and who perhaps may still be considering which of us two will be the better mistress of his house, if Alexas and his worthy brother do not arrange matters so that we must both content ourselves with thinking tenderly of a dead man. That is why I believe that I am no longer indebted to you, that Charmian has more than repaid herself for all the kindness she has ever showed me."

With these words she hurried to the door, but paused on the threshold, exclaiming: "This is the state of affairs; yet I am ready to serve the Queen hand in hand with you as before; for you two—as I have said—are necessary to her. In other respects—I shall follow my own path."

CHAPTER XVII.

CLEOPATRA had sought the venerable Anubis, who now, as the priest of Alexander, at the age of eighty, ruled the whole hierarchy of the country. It was difficult for him to leave his arm-chair, but he had been carried to the observatory to examine the adverse result of the observation made by the Queen herself. The position of the stars, however, had been so unfavourable that the more deeply Cleopatra entered into these matters, the less easy he found it to urge the mitigating influences of distant planets, which he had at first pointed out.

In his reception-hall, however, the chief priest had assured her that the independence of Egypt and the safety of her own person lay in her hands; only—the planets showed this—a terrible sacrifice was required—a sacrifice of which his dignity, his eighty years, and his love for her alike forbade him to speak. Cleopatra was accustomed to hear these mysterious sayings from his lips, and interpreted them in her own way. Many motives had induced her to seek the venerable prelate at this

late hour. In difficult situations he had often aided her with good counsel; but this time she was not led to him by the magic cup of Nektanebus, which the eight pastophori who accompanied it had that day restored to the temple, for since the battle of Actium the superb vessel had been a source of constant anxiety to her.

Cleopatra had now asked the teacher of her childhood the direct question whether the cup—a wide, shallow vessel, with a flat, polished bottom—could really have induced Antony to leave the battle and follow her ere the victory was decided. She had used it just before the conflict between the galleys, and this circumstance led Anubis to answer positively in the affirmative.

Long ago the marvellous chalice had been exhibited to her among the temple treasures, and she was told that every one who induced another person to be reflected from its shining surface obtained the mastery over his will. Her wish to possess it, however, was not gratified, and she did not ask for it again until the limitless devotion and ardent love of Antony had seemed less fervent than of yore. From that time she had never ceased to urge her aged friend to place the wondrous cup in her keeping. At first he had absolutely refused, predicting that its use would bring misfortune upon her; but when her request was followed by an imperative command, and the goblet was entrusted to her, Anubis himself believed

that this *one* vessel did possess the magic power attributed to it. He deemed that the drinking-cup afforded the strongest proof of the magic art, far transcending human ability, of the great goddess by whose aid King Nektanebus—who, according to tradition, was the father of Alexander the Great—was said to have made the vessel in the Isis island of Philæ.

Anubis had intended to remind Cleopatra of his refusal, and show her the great danger incurred by mortals who strove to use powers beyond their sphere. It had been his purpose to bid her remember Phaeton, who had almost kindled a conflagration in the world when he attempted, in the chariot of his father, Phœbus Apollo, to guide the horses of the sun. But this was unnecessary, for he had scarcely assented to the question ere, with passionate vehemence, she ordered him to destroy before her eyes the cup which had brought so much misfortune.

The priest feigned that her desire harmonized with a resolution which he had himself formed.

In fact, before her arrival, he had feared that the goblet might be used in some fatal manner if Octavianus should take possession of the city and country, and the wonder-working vessel should fall into his hands. Nektanebus had made the cup for Egypt. To wrest it from the foreign ruler was acting in the spirit of the last king in whose veins had flowed the blood of the Pharaohs, and

who had toiled with enthusiastic devotion for the independence and liberty of his people. To destroy this man's marvellous work rather than deliver it to the Roman conqueror seemed to the chief priest, after the Queen's command, a sacred duty, and as such he represented it to be when he commanded the smelting furnace to be fired and the cup transformed into a shapeless mass before the eyes of Cleopatra.

While the metal was melting he eagerly told the Queen how easily she could dispense with the vessel which owed its magic power to the mighty Isis.

The spell of woman's charms was also a gift of the goddess. It would suffice to render Antony's heart soft and yielding as the fire melted the gold. Perhaps the Imperator had forfeited, with the Queen's respect, her love—the most priceless of blessings. He, Anubis, would regard this as a great boon of the Deity; "for," he concluded, "Mark Antony is the cliff which will shatter every effort to secure to my royal mistress undiminished the heritage which has come to her and her children from their ancestors, and preserve the independence and prosperity of this beloved land. This cup was a costly treasure. The throne and prosperity of Egypt are worthy of greater sacrifices. But I know that there is none harder for a woman to make than her love."

The meaning of the old man's words Cleopatra

learned the following morning, when she granted the first interview to Timagenes, Octavianus's envoy.

The keen-witted, brilliant man, who had been one of her best teachers and with whom, when a pupil, she had had many an argument, was kindly received, and fulfilled his commission with consummate skill.

The Queen listened attentively to his representations, showed him that her own intellect had not lost in flexibility, though it had gained power; and when she dismissed him, with rich gifts and gracious words, she knew that she could preserve the independence of her beloved native land and retain the throne for herself and her children if she would surrender Antony to the conqueror or to him, as "the person acting," or—these were Timagenes's own words—"remove him forever from the play whose end she had the power to render either brilliant or fateful."

When she was again alone her heart throbbed so passionately and her soul was in such a tumult of agitation that she felt unable to attend the appointed meeting of the Council of the crown. She deferred the session until the following day, and resolved to go out upon the sea, to endeavour to regain her composure.

Antony had refused to see her. This wounded her. The thought of the goblet and its evil influences had by no means passed from her memory

with the destruction of the vessel caused by one of those outbursts of passion to which, in these days of disaster, she yielded more frequently than usual. On the contrary, she felt the necessity of being alone, to collect her thoughts and strive to dispel the clouds from her troubled soul.

The beaker had been one of the treasures of Isis, and the memory of it recalled hours during which, in former days, she had often found composure in the temple of the goddess. She wished to seek the sanctuary unnoticed and, accompanied only by Iras and the chief Introducer,* went, closely veiled, to the neighbouring temple at the Corner of the Muses.

But she failed to find the object of her pilgrimage. The throng which filled it to pray and offer sacrifices, and the fear of being recognized, destroyed her calmness.

She was in the act of retiring, when Gorgias, the architect, followed by an assistant carrying surveying instruments, advanced towards her. She instantly called him to her side, and he informed her how wonderfully Fate itself seemed to favour her plan of building. The mob had destroyed the house of the old philosopher Didymus, and the grey-haired sage, to whom he had offered the shelter of his home, was now ready to transfer the property inherited from his ancestors, if her Majes-

* Marshal of the court.

ty would assure him and his family of her protection.

Then she asked to see the architect's plan for joining the museum to the sanctuary, and became absorbed in the first sketch, to which he had devoted part of the night and morning. He showed it, and with eager urgency Cleopatra commanded him to begin the building as soon as possible and pursue the work night and day. What usually required months must be completed in weeks.

Iras and the "Introducer," clad in plain garments, had waited for her in the temple court and, joined by the architect, accompanied her to the unpretending litter standing at one of the side gates but, instead of entering it, she ordered Gorgias to attend her to the garden.

The inspection proved that the architect was right and, even if the mausoleum occupied a portion of it, and the street which separated it from the Temple of Isis were continued along the shore of the sea, the remainder would still be twice as large as the one belonging to the palace at Lochias.

Cleopatra's thorough examination showed Gorgias that she had some definite purpose in view. Her inquiry whether it would be possible to connect it with the promontory of Lochias indicated what she had in mind, and the architect answered in the affirmative. It was only necessary to tear down some small buildings belonging to the Crown and a little temple of Berenike at the southern part

of the royal harbour. The arm of the Agathodæmon Canal which entered here had been bridged long ago.

The new scene which would result from this change had been conjured before the Queen's mental vision with marvellous celerity, and she described it in brief, vivid language to the architect. The garden should remain, but must be enlarged from the Lochias to the bridge. Thence a covered colonnade would lead to the palace. After Gorgias had assured her that all this could easily be arranged, she gazed thoughtfully at the ground for a time, and then gave orders that the work should be commenced at once, and requested him to spare neither means nor men.

Gorgias foresaw a period of feverish toil, but it did not daunt him. With such a master builder he was ready to roof the whole city. Besides, the commission delighted him because it proved that the woman whose mausoleum was to rise from the earth so swiftly still thought of enhancing the pleasures of existence; for, though she wished the garden to remain unchanged, she desired to see the colonnade and the remainder of the work constructed of costly materials and in beautiful forms. When she bade him farewell, Gorgias kissed her robe with ardent enthusiasm.

What a woman! True, she had not even raised her veil, and was attired in plain dark clothing, but every gesture revealed the most perfect grace.

The arm and hand with which she pointed now here, now there, again seemed to him fairly instinct with life; and he, who deemed perfection of form of so much value, found it difficult to avert his eyes from her marvellous symmetry. And her whole figure! What lines, what genuine aristocratic elegance, and warm, throbbing life!

That morning when Helena, now an inmate of his own home, greeted him, he had essayed to compare her, mentally, with Cleopatra, but speedily desisted. The man to whom Hebe proffers nectar does not ask for even the best wine of Byblus. A feeling of grateful, cheerful satisfaction, difficult to describe, stole over him when the reserved, quiet Helena addressed him so warmly and cordially; but the image of Cleopatra constantly thrust itself between them, and it was difficult for him to understand himself. He had loved many women in succession, and now his heart throbbed for two at once, and the Queen was the brighter of the two stars whose light entranced him. Therefore his honest soul would have considered it a crime to woo Helena now.

Cleopatra knew what an ardent admirer she had won in the able architect, and the knowledge pleased her. She had used no goblet to gain *him*. Doubtless he would begin to build the mausoleum the next morning. The vault must have space for several coffins. Antony had more than once expressed the desire to be buried beside her, wher-

ever he might die, and this had occurred ere she possessed the beaker. She must in any case grant him the same favour, no matter in what place or by whose hand he met death, and the bedimmed light of his existence was but too evidently nearing extinction. If she spared him, Octavianus would strike him from the ranks of the living, and she—— Again she was overpowered by the terrible, feverish restlessness which had induced her to command the destruction of the goblet, and had brought her to the temple. She could not return in this mood to meet her councillors, receive visitors, greet her children. This was the birthday of the twins; Charmian had reminded her of it and undertaken to provide the gifts. How could she have found time and thought for such affairs?

She had returned from the chief priest late in the evening, yet had asked for a minute description of the condition in which they found Mark Antony. The report made by Iras harmonized with the state in which she had herself seen him during and after the battle. Ay, his brooding gloom seemed to have deepened. Charmian had helped her dress in the morning, and had been on the point of making her difficult confession, and owning that she had aided Barine to escape the punishment of her royal mistress; but ere she could begin, Timagenes was announced, for Cleopatra had not risen from her couch until a late hour.

The object for which the Queen had sought the temple had not been gained; but the consultation with Gorgias had diverted her mind, and the emotions which the thought of her last resting-place had evoked now drowned everything else, as the roar of the surf dominates the twittering of the swallows on the rocky shore.

Ay, she needed calmness! She must weigh and ponder over many things in absolute quietude, and this she could not obtain at Lochias. Then her glance rested upon the little sanctuary of Berenike, which she had ordered removed to make room for a garden near at hand, where the children could indulge their love of creative work. It was empty. She need fear no interruption there. The interior contained only a single, quiet, pleasant chamber, with the image of Berenike. The "Introducer" commanded the guard to admit no other visitors, and soon the little white marble, circular room with its vaulted roof received the Queen. She sank down on one of the bronze benches opposite to the statue. All was still; in this cool silence her mind, trained to thought, could find that for which it longed—clearness of vision, a plain understanding of her own feelings and position in the presence of the impending decision.

At first her thoughts wandered to and fro like a dove ere it chooses the direction of its flight; but after the question why she was having a tomb

built so hurriedly, when she would be permitted to live, her mind found the right track. Among the Scythian guards, the Mauritanians, and Blemmyes in the army there were plenty of savage fellows whom a word from her lips and a handful of gold would have set upon the vanquished Antony, as the huntsman's "Seize him!" urges the hounds. A hint, and among the wretched magicians and Magians in the Rhakotis, the Egyptian quarter of the city, twenty men would have assassinated him by poison or wily snares; one command to the Macedonians in the guard of the Mellakes or youths, and he would be a captive that very day, and to-morrow, if she so ordered, on the way to Asia, whither Octavianus, as Timagenes told her, had gone.

What prevented her from grasping the gold, giving the hint, issuing the command?

Doubtless she thought of the magic goblet, now melted, which had constrained him to cast aside honour, fame, and power, as worthless rubbish, in order to obey her behest not to leave her; but though this remembrance burdened her soul, it had no decisive influence. It was no one thing which prisoned her hand and lips, but every fibre of her being, every pulsation of her heart, every glance back into the past to the confines of childhood.

Yet she listened to other thoughts also. They reminded her of her children, the elation of power,

love for the land of her ancestors, and the peril which menaced it without her, the bliss of seeing the light, and the darkness, the silence, the dull rigidity of death, the destruction of the body and the mind cherished and developed with so much care and toil, the horrible torture which might be associated with the transition from life to death—the act of dying. And what lay before her in the existence which lasted an eternity? When she no longer breathed beneath the sun, even if the death hour was deferred, and she found that not Epicurus, who believed that with death all things ended, had been right, but the ancient teachings of the Egyptians, what would await her in that world beyond the grave if she purchased a few more years of life by the murder or betrayal of her lover, her husband?

Yet perhaps the punishments inflicted upon the condemned were but bugbears invented by the priesthood, which guarded the regulation of the state in order to curb the unruly conduct of the populace and terrify the turbulent transgressors of the law. And, whispered the daring Greek spirit, in the abode of the condemned, not in the Garden of Aalû, the Elysian Fields of the Egyptians, she would meet her father and mother and all her wicked ancestors down to Euergetes I, who was succeeded by the infamous Philopater. Thus the thought of the other world became an antecedent so uncertain as to permit no definite inference, and

might therefore be left out of the account. How would—this must be the form of the question—the years purchased by the murder or betrayal of one whom she loved shape themselves for her?

During the night the image of the murdered man would drive sleep from her couch, and the Furies, the Diræ, as the Roman Antony called them, who pursue murderers with the serpent scourge, were no idle creations of poetic fancy, but fully symbolized the restlessness of the criminal, driven to and fro by the pangs of conscience. The chief good, the painless happiness of the Epicureans, was forever lost to those burdened by such guilt.

And during the hours of the day and evening?

Ay, then she would be free to heap pleasure on pleasure. But for whom were the festivals to be celebrated; with whom could she share them? For many a long year no banquet, no entertainment had given her enjoyment without Mark Antony. For whom did she adorn herself or strive to stay the vanishing charm? And how soon would anguish of soul utterly destroy the spell, which was slowly, slowly, yet steadily diminishing, and, when the mirror revealed wrinkles which the skill of no Olympus could efface, when she—— No, she was not created to grow old! Did the few years of life which must contain so much misery really possess a value great enough to surrender the right of being called by present and future

generations the bewitching Cleopatra, the most irresistible of women?

And the children?

Yes, it would have been delightful to see them grow up and occupy the throne, but serious, decisive doubts soon blended even with an idea so rich in joy.

How glorious to greet Cæsarion as sovereign of the world in Octavianus's place! But how could the dreamer, whose first love affair had caused the total sacrifice of dignity and violation of the law, and who now seemed to have once more relapsed into the old state of torpor, attain the position?

The other children inspired fair hopes, and how beautiful it appeared to the mother's heart to see Antonius Helios as King of Egypt; Cleopatra Selene with her first child in her arms; and little Alexander a noble statesman and hero, rich in virtue and talents! Yet, what would they, Antony's children, whose education she hoped Archibius would direct, feel for the mother who had been their father's murderess?

She shuddered at the thought, remembering the hours when her childish heart had shed tears of blood over the infamous mother whom her father had execrated. And Queen Tryphœna, whom history recorded as a monster, had not killed her husband, but merely thrust him from the throne.

Arsinoe's execrations of her mother and sister came back to her memory, and the thought that

the rosy lips of the twins and her darling Alexander could ever open to curse her, the idea that the children would ever raise their beloved hands to point at her, the wicked murderess of their father, with horror and scorn—— No, no, and again no! She would not purchase a few more years of valueless life at the cost of this humiliation and shame.

Purchase of whom?

Of that Octavianus who had robbed her son of the heritage of his father, Cæsar, and whose mention in the will was like an imputation on her fidelity—the cold-hearted, calculating upstart, whose nature from their first meeting in Rome had repelled, rebuffed, chilled her; of the man by whose cajolery and power her husband—for in her own eyes and those of the Egyptians Antony held this position—had been induced to wed his sister, Octavia, and thereby stamp her, Cleopatra, as merely his love, cast a doubt upon the legitimate birth of her children; of the false friend of the trusting Antony who, before the battle of Actium, had most deeply humiliated and insulted both!

On the contrary, her royal pride rebelled against obeying the command of such a man to commit the most atrocious deed; and from childhood this pride had been as much a part of her nature as her breath and the pulsation of her heart. And yet, for her children's sake, she

might perhaps have incurred this disgrace, had it not been at the same time the grave of the best and noblest things which she desired to implant in the young souls of the twins and Alexander.

While thinking of the children's curses she had risen from her seat. Why should she reflect and consider longer? She had found the clear perception she sought. Let Gorgias hasten the building of the tomb. Should Fate demand her life, she would not resist if she were permitted to preserve it only at the cost of murder or base treachery. Her lover's was already forfeited. At his side she had enjoyed a radiant, glowing, peerless bliss, of which the world still talked with envious amazement. At his side, when all was over, she would rest in the grave, and compel the world to remember with respectful sympathy the royal lovers, Antony and Cleopatra. Her children should be able to think of her with untroubled hearts, and not even the shadow of a bitter feeling, a warning thought, should deter them from adorning their parents' grave with flowers, weeping at its foot, invoking and offering sacrifices to their spirits.

Then she glanced at the statue of Berenike, who had also once worn on her brow the double crown of Egypt. She, too, had early died a violent death; she, too, had known how to love. The vow to sacrifice her beautiful hair to Aphrodite if her husband returned uninjured from the Syrian war had rendered her name illustrious. "Bere-

nike's Hair" was still to be seen as a constellation in the night heavens.

Though this woman had sinned often and heavily, one act of loyal love had made her an honoured, worshipped princess. She—Cleopatra—would do something still greater. The sacrifice which she intended to impose upon herself would weigh far more heavily in the balance than a handful of beautiful tresses, and would comprise sovereignty and life.

With head erect and a sense of proud self-reliance she gazed at the noble marble countenance of the Cyrenian queen. Ere entering the sanctuary she had imagined that she knew how the criminals whom she had sentenced to death must feel. Now that she herself had done with life, she felt as if she were relieved from a heavy burden, and yet her heart ached, and—especially when she thought of her children—she was overwhelmed with the emotion which is the most painful of all forms of compassion—pity for herself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Cleopatra left the temple, Iras marvelled at the change in her appearance. The severe tension which had given her beautiful face a shade of harshness had yielded to an expression of gentle sadness that enhanced its charm, yet her features quickly brightened as her attendant pointed to the procession which was just entering the forecourt of the palace.

In Alexandria and throughout Egypt birthdays were celebrated as far as possible. Therefore, to do honour to the twins, the children of the city had been sent to offer their congratulations, and at the same time to assure their royal mother of the love and devotion of the citizens.

The return to the palace occupied only a few minutes, and as Cleopatra, hastily donning festal garments, gazed down at the bands of children, it seemed as if Fate by this fair spectacle had given her a sign of approval of her design.

She was soon standing hand in hand with the twins upon the balcony before which the procession had halted. Hundreds of boys and girls of

the same age as the prince and princess had flocked thither, the former bearing bouquets, the latter small baskets filled with lilies and roses. Every head was crowned with a wreath, and many of the girls wore garlands of flowers. A chorus of youths and maidens sang a festal hymn, beseeching the gods to grant the royal mother and children every happiness; the leader of the chorus of girls made a short address in the name of the city, and during this speech the children formed in ranks, the tallest in the rear, the smallest in the front, and the others between according to their height. The scene resembled a living garden, in which rosy faces were the beautiful flowers.

Cleopatra thanked the citizens for the charming greeting sent to her by those whom they held dearest, and assured them that she returned their love. Her eyes grew dim with tears as she went with her three children to the throng who offered their congratulations, and an unusually pretty little girl whom she kissed threw her arms around her as tenderly as if she were her own mother. And how beautiful was the scene when the girls strewed the contents of their little baskets on the ground before her, and the boys, with many a ringing shout and loving wish, offered the bouquets to her and the twins!

Charmian had not forgotten to provide the gifts; and when the chamberlains and waiting-women led the children into a large hall to offer

them refreshments, the Queen's eyes sparkled so brightly that the companion of her childhood ventured to make her difficult confession.

And, as so often happens, the event we most dread shows, when it actually occurs, a friendly or indifferent aspect; this was the case now. Nothing in life is either great or small—the one may be transformed to the other, according to the things with which it is compared. The tallest man becomes a dwarf beside a rocky giant of the mountain chain, the smallest is a Titan to the swarming ants in the forest. The beggar seizes as a treasure what the rich man scornfully casts aside. That which the day before yesterday seemed to Cleopatra unendurable, roused her keenest anxiety, robbed her of part of her night's repose, and induced her to adopt strenuous measures, now appeared trivial and scarcely worthy of consideration.

Yesterday and to-day had brought events and called up questions which forced Barine's disappearance into the realm of unimportant matters.

Charmian's confession was preceded by the statement that she longed for rest yet, nevertheless, was ready to remain with her royal friend, in every situation, until she no longer desired her services and sent her away. But she feared that this moment had come.

Cleopatra interrupted her with the assurance that she was speaking of something utterly impossible; and when Charmian disclosed Barine's es-

cape, and admitted that it was she who had aided the flight of the innocent and sorely threatened granddaughter of Didymus, the Queen started up angrily and frowned, but it was only for a moment. Then, with a smile, she shook her finger at her friend, embraced her, and gravely but kindly assured her that, of all vices, ingratitude was most alien to her nature. The companion of her childhood had bestowed so many proofs of faithfulness, love, self-sacrifice, and laborious service in her behalf that they could not be long outweighed by a single act of wilful disobedience. An abundant supply would still remain, by virtue of which she might continue to sin without fearing that Cleopatra would ever part from her Charmian.

The latter again perceived that nothing on earth could be hostile or sharp enough to sever the bond which united her to this woman. When her lips overflowed with the gratitude which filled her heart, Cleopatra admitted that it seemed as if, in aiding Barine's escape, she had rendered her a service. The caution with which Charmian had concealed Barine's refuge had not escaped her notice, and she did not ask to learn it. It was enough for her that the dangerous beauty was out of Cæsarion's reach. As for Antony, a wall now separated him from the world, and consequently from the woman who, spite of Alexas's accusations, had probably never stood closer to his heart.

Charmian now eagerly strove to show the

Queen what had induced the Syrian to pursue Barine so vindictively. It was evident—and scarcely needed proof—that Mark Antony's whole acquaintanceship with the old scholar's granddaughter had been far from leading to any tender relation. But Cleopatra gave only partial attention. The man whom she had loved with every pulsation of her heart already seemed to her only a dear memory. She did not forget the happiness enjoyed with and through him, or the wrong she had done by the use of the magic goblet; yet with the wall on the Choma, which divided him from her and the rest of the world, and her command to have the mausoleum built, she imagined that the season of love was over. Any new additions to this chapter of the life of her heart were but the close. Even the jealousy which had clouded the happiness of her love like a fleeting, rapidly changing shadow, she believed she had now renounced forever.

While Charmian protested that no one save Dion had ever been heard with favour by Barine, and related many incidents of her former life, Cleopatra's thoughts were with Antony. Like the image of the beloved dead, the towering figure of the Roman hero rose before her mind, but she recalled him only as he was prior to the battle of Actium. She desired and expected nothing more from the broken-spirited man, whose condition was perhaps her own fault. But she had resolved to

atone for her guilt, and would do so at the cost of throne and life. This settled the account. Whatever her remaining span of existence might add or subtract, was part of the bargain.

The entrance of Alexas interrupted her. With fiery passion he expressed his regret that he had been defrauded by base intrigues of the right bestowed upon him to pass sentence upon a guilty woman. This was the more difficult to bear because he was deprived of the possibility of providing for the pursuit of the fugitive. Antony had honoured him with the commission to win Herod back to his cause. He was to leave Alexandria that very night. As nothing could be expected in this matter from the misanthropic Imperator, he hoped that the Queen would avenge such an offence to her dignity, and adopt severe measures towards the singer and her last lover, Dion, who with sacrilegious hands had wounded the son of Cæsar.

But Cleopatra, with royal dignity, kept him within the limits of his position, commanded him not to mention the affair to her again, and then, with a sorrowful smile, wished him success with Herod, in whose return to the lost cause of Antony, however, much as she prized the skill of the mediator, she did not believe.

When he had retired, she exclaimed to Charmian: "Was I blind? This man is a traitor! We shall discover it. Wherever Dion has taken his

young wife, let her be carefully concealed, not from me, but from this Syrian. It is easier to defend one's self against the lion than the scorpion. You, my friend, will see that Archibius seeks me this very day. I must talk with him, and—you no longer have any thought of a parting? Another will come soon enough, which will forever forbid these lips from kissing your dear face."

As she spoke, she again clasped the companion of her childhood in her arms, and when Iras entered to request an audience for Lucilius, Antony's most faithful friend, Cleopatra, who had noticed the younger woman's envious glance at the embrace, said: "Was I mistaken in fancying that you imagined yourself slighted for Charmian, who is an older friend? That would be wrong; for I love and need you both. You are her niece, and indebted to her for much kindness from your earliest childhood. So, even though you will lose the joy of revenge upon a hated enemy, forget what has happened, as I did, and maintain your former affectionate companionship. I will reward you for it with the only thing that the daughter of the wealthy Krates cannot purchase, yet which she probably rates at no low value—the love of her royal friend."

With these words she clasped Iras also in a close embrace, and when the latter left the room to summon Lucilius, she thought: "No woman

has ever won so much love; perhaps that is why she possesses so great a treasure of it, and can afford such unspeakable happiness by its bestowal. Or is she so much beloved because she entered the world full of its wealth, and dispenses it as the sun diffuses light? Surely that must be the case. I have reason to believe it, for whom did I ever love save the Queen? No one, not even myself, and I know no one in whose love for me I can believe. But why did Dion, whom I loved so fervently, disdain me? Fool! Why did Mark Antony prefer Cleopatra to Octavia, who was not less fair, whose heart was his, and whose hand held the sovereignty of half the world?"

Passing on as she spoke, she soon returned, ushering the Roman Lucilius into the presence of the Queen. A gallant deed had bound this man to Antony. After the battle of Philippi, when the army of the republicans fled, Brutus had been on the point of being seized by the enemy's horsemen; but Lucilius, at the risk of being cut down, had personated him, and thereby, though but for a short time, rescued him. This had seemed to Antony unusual and noble and, in his generous manner, he had not only forgiven him, but bestowed his favour upon him. Lucilius was grateful, and gave him the same fidelity he had showed to Brutus. At Actium he had risked Antony's favour to prevent his deserting Cleopatra after the battle, and then accompanied him in his flight. Now he

was bearing him company in his seclusion on the Choma.

The grey-haired man who, but a short time before, had retained all the vigour of youth, approached the Queen with bowed head and saddened heart. His face, so regular in its contours, had undergone a marked change within the past few weeks. The cheeks were sunken, the features had grown sharper, and there was a sorrowful expression in the eyes, which, when informing Cleopatra of his friend's condition, glittered with tears.

Before the hapless battle he was one of Cleopatra's most enthusiastic admirers; but since he had been forced to see his friend and benefactor risk fame, happiness, and honour to follow the Queen, he had cherished a feeling of bitter resentment towards her. He would certainly have spared himself this mission, had he not been sure that she who had brought her lover to ruin was the only person who could rouse him from spiritless languor to fresh energy and interest in life.

From motives of friendship, urged by no one, he came unbidden to the woman whom he had formerly so sincerely admired, to entreat her to cheer the unfortunate man, rouse him, and remind him of his duty. He had little news to impart; for on the voyage she had herself witnessed long enough the pitiable condition of her husband. Now Antony

was beginning to be content in it, and this was what most sorely troubled the faithful friend.

The Imperator had called the little palace which he occupied on the Choma his Timonium, because he compared himself with the famous Athenian misanthrope who, after fortune abandoned him, had also been betrayed by many of his former friends. Even at Tænarum he had thought of returning to the Choma, and by means of a wall, which would separate it from the mainland, rendering it as inaccessible as—according to rumour—the grave of Timon at Halæ near Athens. Gorgias had erected it, and whoever wished to visit the hermit was forced to go by sea and request admittance, which was granted to few.

Cleopatra listened to Lucilius with sympathy, and then asked whether there was no way of cheering or comforting the wretched man.

"No, your Majesty," he replied. "His favourite occupation is to recall what he once possessed, but only to show the uselessness of these memories. 'What joys has life not offered me?' he asks, and then adds: 'But they were repeated again and again, and after being enjoyed for the tenth time they became monotonous and lost their charm. Then they caused satiety to the verge of loathing.' Only necessary things, such as bread and water, he says, possess real value; but he desires neither, because he has even less taste for them than for the dainties which spoil a man's morrow. Yesterday.

in a specially gloomy hour, he spoke of gold. This was perhaps most worthy of desire. The mere sight of it awakened pleasant hopes, because it might afford so many gratifications. Then he laughed bitterly, exclaiming that those joys were the very ones which produced the most disagreeable satiety. Even gold was not worth the trouble of stretching out one's hand.

"He is fond of enlarging upon such fancies, and finds images to make his meaning clear.

"'In the snow upon the highest mountain-peak the feet grow cold,' he said. 'In the mire they are warm, but the dark mud is ugly and clings to them.'

"Then I remarked that between the morass and the mountain-snows lie sunny valleys where life would be pleasant; but he flew into a rage, vehemently protesting that he would never be content with the pitiable middle course of Horace. Then he exclaimed: 'Ay, I am vanquished. Octavianus and his Agrippa are the conquerors; but if a rock mutilates or an elephant's clumsy foot crushes me, I am nevertheless of a higher quality than either.'"

"There spoke the old Mark Antony!" cried Cleopatra; but again Lucilius's loyal heart throbbed with resentment against the woman who had fostered the recklessness which had brought his powerful friend to ruin, and he continued:

"But he often sees himself in a different light.

'No writer could invent a more unworthy life than mine,' he exclaimed recently. 'A farce ending in a tragedy.'"

Lucilius might have added still harsher sayings, but the sorrowful expression in the tearful eyes of the afflicted Queen silenced them upon his lips.

Yet Cleopatra's name blended with most of the words uttered by the broken-spirited man. Sometimes it was associated with the most furious reproaches, but more frequently with expressions of boundless delight and wild outbursts of fervent longing, and this was what inspired Lucilius with the hope that the Queen's influence would be effectual with his friend. Therefore he repeated some especially ardent words, to which Cleopatra listened with grateful joy.

Yet, when Lucilius paused, she remarked that doubtless the misanthropist had spoken of her, and probably of Octavia also, in quite a different way. She was prepared for the worst, for she was one of the rocks against which his greatness had been shattered.

This reminded Lucilius of the comment Antony had made upon the three women whom he had wedded, and he answered reluctantly: "Fulvia, the wife of his youth—I knew the bold, hot-blooded woman, the former wife of Clodius—he called the tempest which swelled his sails."

"Yes, yes!" cried Cleopatra. "So she did. He owes her much; but I, too, am indebted to the

dead Fulvia. She taught him to recognize and yield to woman's power."

"Not always to his advantage," retorted Lucilius, whose resentment was revived by the last sentence and, without heeding the faint flush on the Queen's cheek, he added: "Of Octavia he said that she was the straight path which leads to happiness, and those who are content to walk in it are acceptable to gods and men."

"Then why did he not suffer it to content him?" cried Cleopatra wrathfully.

"Fulvia's school," replied the Roman, "was probably the last where he would learn the moderation which—as you know—is so alien to his nature. His opinion of the quiet valleys and middle course you have just heard."

"But I, what have *I* been to him?" urged the Queen.

Lucilius bent his gaze for a short time on the floor, then answered hesitatingly:

"You asked to hear, and the Queen's command must be obeyed. He compared your Majesty to a delicious banquet given to celebrate a victory, at which the guests, crowned with garlands, revel *before* the battle——"

"Which is lost," said the Queen hurriedly, in a muffled voice. "The comparison is apt. Now, after the defeat, it would be absurd to prepare another feast. The tragedy is closing, so the play (doubtless he said so) which preceded it would be

but a wearisome repetition if performed a second time. One thing, it is true, seems desirable—a closing act of reconciliation. If you think it is in my power to recall my husband to active life, rely upon me. The banquet of which he spoke occupied long years. The dessert will consume little time, but I am ready to serve it. When I asked permission to visit him he refused. What plan of meeting have you arranged?"

"That I will leave to your feminine delicacy of feeling," replied Lucilius. "Yet I have come with a request whose fulfilment will perhaps contain the answer. Eros, Mark Antony's faithful body-slave, humbly petitions your Majesty to grant him a few minutes' audience. You know the worthy fellow. He would die for you and his master, and he—I once heard from your lips the remark of King Antiochus, that no man was great to his body-slave—thus Eros sees his master's weaknesses and lofty qualities from a nearer point of view than we, and he is shrewd. Antony gave him his freedom long ago, and if your Majesty does not object to receiving a man so low in station——"

"Let him come," replied Cleopatra. "Your demand upon me is just. Unhappily, I am but too well aware of the atonement due your friend. Before you came, I was engaged in making preparations for the fulfilment of one of his warmest wishes."

With these words she dismissed the Roman. Her feelings as she watched his departure were of very mingled character. The yearning for the happiness of which she had been so long deprived had again awaked, while the unkind words which he had applied to her still rankled in her heart. But the door had scarcely closed behind Lucilius when the usher announced a deputation of the members of the museum.

The learned gentlemen came to complain of the wrong which had been done to their colleague, Didymus, and also to express their loyalty during these trying times. Cleopatra assured them of her favour, and said that she had already offered ample compensation to the old philosopher. In a certain sense she was one of themselves. They all knew that, from early youth, she had honoured and shared their labours. In proof of this, she would present to the library of the museum the two hundred thousand volumes from Pergamus, one of the most valuable gifts Mark Antony had ever bestowed upon her, and which she had hitherto regarded merely as a loan. This she hoped would repay Didymus for the injury which, to her deep regret, had been inflicted upon him, and at least partially repair the loss sustained by the former library of the museum during the conflagration in the Bruchium.

The sages, eagerly assuring her of their gratitude and devotion, retired. Most of them were

personally known to Cleopatra who, to their mutual pleasure and advantage, had measured her intellectual powers with the most brilliant minds of their body.

The sun had already set, when a procession of the priests of Serapis, the chief god of the city, whose coming had been announced the day before, appeared at Lochias. Accompanied by torch and lantern bearers, it moved forward with slow and solemn majesty. In harmony with the nature of Serapis, there were many reminders of death.

The meaning of every image, every standard, every shrine, every peculiarity of the music and singing, was familiar to the Queen. Even the changing colours of the lights referred to the course of growth and decay in the universe and in human life, and the magnificent close of the chant of homage which represented the reception of the royal soul into the essence of the deity, the apotheosis of the sovereign, was well suited to stir the heart; for a sea of light unexpectedly flooded the whole procession and, while its glow irradiated the huge pile of the palace, the sea with its forest of ships and masts, and the shore with its temples, pylons, obelisks, and superb buildings, all the choruses, accompanied by the music of sackbuts, cymbals, and lutes, blended in a mighty hymn, whose waves of sound rose to the star-strewn sky and reached the open sea beyond the Pharos.

Many a symbolical image suggested death and

the resurrection, defeat and a victory following it by the aid of great Serapis; and when the torches retired, vanishing in the darkness, with the last notes of the chanting of the priests, Cleopatra raised her head, feeling as if the vow she had made during the gloomy singing of the aged men and the extinguishing of the torches had received the approval of the deity brought by her forefathers to Alexandria and enthroned there to unite in his own person the nature of the Greek and the Egyptian gods.

Her tomb was to be built and, if destiny was fulfilled, to receive her lover and herself. She had perceived from Antony's bitter words, as well as the looks and tones of Lucilius, that he, as well as the man to whom her heart still clung with indissoluble bonds, held her responsible for Actium and the fall of his greatness.

The world, she knew, would imitate them, but it should learn that if love had robbed the greatest man of his day of fame and sovereignty, that love had been worthy of the highest price.

The belief which had just been symbolically represented to her—that it was allotted to the vanishing light to rise again in new and radiant splendour—she would maintain for the present, though the best success could scarcely lead to anything more than merely fanning the glimmering spark and deferring its extinction.

For herself there was no longer any great vic-

tory to win which would be worth the conflict. Yet the weapons must not rest until the end. Antony must not perish, growling, like a second Timon, or a wild beast caught in a snare. She would rekindle, though but for the last blaze, the fire of his hero-nature, which blind love for her and the magic spell that had enabled her to bind his will had covered for a time with ashes.

While listening to the resurrection hymn of the priests of Serapis, she had asked herself if it might not be possible to give Antony, when he had been roused to fresh energy, the son of Cæsar as a companion in arms. True, she had found the boy in a mood far different from the one for which she had hoped. If he had once been carried on to a bold deed, it seemed to have exhausted his energy; for he remained absorbed in the most pitiable love-sickness. Yet he had not recovered from his illness. When he was better he would surely wake to active interest in the events which threatened to exert so great an influence on his own existence and, like the humblest slave, lament the defeat of Actium. Hitherto he had listened to the tidings of battle which had reached his ears with an indifference that seemed intelligible and pardonable only when attributed to his wound.

His tutor Rhodon had just requested a leave of absence, remarking that Cæsarion would not lack companions, since he was expecting Antyllus and other youths of his own age. A flood of light

streamed from the windows of the reception hall of the "King of kings." There was still time to seek him and make him understand what was at stake. Ah! if she could but succeed in awaking his father's spirit! If that culpable attack should prove the harbinger of future deeds of manly daring!

No interview with him as yet had encouraged this expectation, but a mother's heart easily sees, even in disappointment, a step which leads to a new hope. When Charmian entered to announce Antony's body-slave, she sent word to him to wait, and requested her friend to accompany her to her son.

As they approached the apartments occupied by Cæsarion, Antyllus's loud voice reached them through the open door, whose curtain was only half drawn. The first word which the Queen distinguished was her own name; so, motioning to her companion, she stood still. Barine was again the subject of conversation.

Antony's son was relating what Alexas had told him. Cleopatra, the Syrian had asserted, intended to send the young beauty to the mines or into exile, and severely punish Dion; but both had made their escape. The Ephebi had behaved treacherously by taking sides with their foe. But this was because they were not yet invested with their robes. He hoped to induce his father to do this as soon as he shook off his pitiable misan-

thropy. And he must also be persuaded to direct the pursuit of the fugitives. "This will not be difficult," he cried insolently, "for the old man appreciates beauty, and has himself cast an eye on the singer. If they capture her, I'll guarantee nothing, you 'King of kings!' for, spite of his grey beard, he can cut us all out with the women, and Barine—as we have heard—doesn't think a man of much importance until his locks begin to grow thin. I gave Derketæus orders to send all his men in pursuit. He's as cunning as a fox, and the police are compelled to obey him."

"If I were not forced to lie here like a dead donkey, I would soon find her," sighed Cæsarion. "Night or day, she is never out of my mind. I have already spent everything I possessed in the search. Yesterday I sent for the steward Seleukus. What is the use of being my mother's son, and the fat little fellow isn't specially scrupulous! He will do nothing, yet there must be gold enough. The Queen has sunk millions in the sand on the Syrian frontier of the Delta. There is to be a square hole or something of the sort dug there to hide the fleet. I only half understand the absurd plan. The money might have paid hundreds of spies. So talents are thrown away, and the strong-box is locked against the son. But I'll find one that will open to me. I must have her, though I risk the crown. It always sounds like a jeer when they call me the King of kings. I am not fit for sov-

ereignty. Besides, the throne will be seized ere I really ascend it. We are conquered, and if we succeed in concluding a peace, which will secure us life and a little more, we must be content. For my part, I shall be satisfied with a country estate on the water, a sufficient supply of money and, above all, Barine. What do I care for Egypt? As Cæsar's son I ought to have ruled Rome; but the immortals knew what they were doing when they prompted my father to disinherit me. To govern the world one must have less need of sleep. Really—you know it—I always feel tired, even when I am well. People must let me alone! Your father, too, Antyllus, is laying down his arms and letting things go as they will."

"Ah, so he is!" cried Antony's son indignantly. "But just wait! The sleeping lion will wake again, and, when he uses his teeth and paws——"

"My mother will run away, and your father will follow her," replied Cæsarion with a melancholy smile, wholly untinged by scorn. "All is lost. But conquered kings and queens are permitted to live. Cæsar's son will not be exhibited to the Quirites in the triumphal procession. Rhodon says that there would be an insurrection if I appeared in the Forum. If I go there again, it certainly will not be in Octavianus's train. I am not suited for that kind of ignominy. It would stifle me and, ere I would grant any man the

pleasure of dragging the son of Cæsar behind him to increase his own renown, I would put an end ten, nay, a hundred times over, in the good old Roman fashion, to my life, which is by no means especially attractive. What is sweeter than sound sleep, and who will disturb and rouse me when Death has lowered his torch before me? But now I think I shall be spared this extreme. Whatever else they may inflict upon me will scarcely exceed my powers of endurance. If any one has learned contentment it is I. The King of kings and Co-Regent of the Great Queen has been trained persistently, and with excellent success, to be content. What should I be, and what *am* I? Yet I do not complain, and wish to accuse no one. We need not summon Octavianus, and when he is here let him take what he will if he only spares the lives of my mother, the twins, and little Alexander, whom I love, and bestows on me the estate —the main thing is that it must be full of fishponds—of which I spoke. The private citizen Cæsarion, who devotes his time to fishing and the books he likes to read, will gladly be allowed to choose a wife to suit his own taste. The more humble her origin, the more easily I shall win the consent of the Roman guardian."

"Do you know, Cæsarion," interrupted Antony's unruly son, leaning back on the cushions and stretching his feet farther in front of him, "if you were not the King of kings I should be in-

clined to call you a base, mean-natured fellow! One who has the good fortune to be the son of Julius Cæsar ought not to forget it so disgracefully. My gall overflows at your whimpering. By the dog! It was one of my most senseless pranks to take you to the singer. I should think there would be other things to occupy the mind of the King of kings. Besides, Barine cares no more for you than the last fish you caught. She showed that plainly enough. I say once more, if Derketæus's men succeed in capturing the beauty who has robbed you of your senses, she won't go with you to your miserable estate to cook the fish you catch, for if we have her again, and my father holds out his hand to her, all your labour will be in vain. He saw the fair enchantress only twice, and had no time to become better acquainted, but she captured his fancy and, if I remind him of her, who knows what will happen?"

Here Cleopatra beckoned to her companion and returned to her apartments with drooping head. On reaching them, she broke the silence, saying: "Listening, Charmian, is unworthy of a Queen; but if all listeners heard things so painful, one need no longer guard keyholes and chinks of doors. I must recover my calmness ere I receive Eros. One thing more. Is Barine's hiding-place secure?"

"I don't know—Archibius says so."

"Very well. They are searching for her zeal-

ously enough, as you heard, and she must not be found. I am glad that she did not set a snare for the boy. How a jealous heart leads us astray! Were she here, I would grant her anything to make amends for my unjust suspicion of her and Antony. And to think that Alexas—but for your interposition he would have succeeded—meant to send her to the mines! It is a terrible warning to be on my guard. Against whom? First of all, my own weakness. This is a day of recognition. A noble aim, but on the way the feet bleed, and the heart—ah! Charmian, the poor, weak, disappointed heart!"

She sighed heavily, and supported her head on the arm resting upon the table at her side. The polished, exquisitely grained surface of thya-wood was worth a large estate; the gems in the rings and bracelets which glittered on her hand and arm would have purchased a principality. This thought entered her mind and, overpowered by a feeling of angry disgust, she would fain have cast all the costly rubbish into the sea or the destroying flames.

She would gladly have been a beggar, content with the barley bread of Epicurus, she said to herself, if in return she could but have inspired her son even with the views of the reckless blusterer Antyllus. Her worst fears had not pictured Cæsarion so weak, so insignificant. She could no longer rest upon her cushions; and while, with drooping

head, she gazed backward over the past, the accusing voice in her own breast cried out that she was reaping what she had sowed. She had repressed, curbed the boy's awakening will to secure his obedience ; understood how to prevent any exercise of his ability or efforts in wider circles.

True, it had been done on many a pretext. Why should not her son taste the quiet happiness which she had enjoyed in the garden of Epicurus? And was not the requirement that whoever is to command must first learn to obey, based upon old experiences?

But this was a day of reckoning and insight, and for the first time she found courage to confess that her own burning ambition had marked out the course of Cæsarion's education. She had not repressed his talents from cool calculation, but it had been pleasant to her to see him grow up free from aspirations. She had granted the dreamer repose without arousing him. How often she had rejoiced over the certainty that this son, on whom Antony, after his victory over the Parthians, had bestowed the title of Co-Regent, would never rebel against his mother's guardianship! The welfare of the state had doubtless been better secured in her trained hands than in those of an inexperienced boy. And the proud consciousness of power! Her heart swelled. So long as she lived she would remain Queen. To transfer the sovereignty to another, whatever name he might bear, had

seemed to her impossible. Now she knew how little her son yearned for lofty things. Her heart contracted. The saying "You reap what you sowed" gave her no peace, and wherever she turned in her past life she perceived the fruit of the seeds which she had buried in the ground. The field was sinking under the burden of the ears of misfortune. The harvest was ripe for the reaper; but, ere he raised the sickle, the owner's claim must be preserved. Gorgias must hasten the building of the tomb; the end could not be long deferred. How to shape this worthily, if the victor left her no other choice, had just been pointed out by the son of whom she was ashamed. His father's noble blood forbade him to bear the deepest ignominy with the patience his mother had inculcated.

It had grown late ere she admitted Antony's body-slave, but for her the business of the night was just commencing. After he had gone she would be engaged for hours with the commanders of the army, the fleet, the fortifications. The soliciting of allies, too, must be carried on by means of letters containing the most stirring appeals to the heart.

Eros, Antony's body-slave, appeared. His kind eyes filled with tears at the sight of the Queen. Grief had not lessened the roundness of his handsome face, but the expression of mischievous, often insolent, gaiety had given place to a sorrowful droop of the lips, and his fair hair had begun to turn grey.

Lucilius's information that Cleopatra had consented to make advances to Antony had seemed like the rising of the sun after a long period of darkness. In his eyes, not only his master, but everything else, must yield to the power of the Queen. He had heard Antony at Tarsus inveigh against "the Egyptian serpent," protesting that he would make her pay so dearly for her questionable conduct towards himself and the cause of Cæsar that the treasure-houses on the Nile should be like an empty wine-skin; yet, a few hours after, body and soul had been in her toils. So it had continued till the battle of Actium. Now there was nothing more to lose; but what might not Cleopatra bestow upon his master? He thought of the delightful years during which his face had grown so round, and every day fresh pleasures and spectacles, such as the world would never again witness, had satiated eye and ear, palate and nostril, —nay, even curiosity. If they could be repeated, even in a simpler form, so much the better. His main—nay, almost his sole—desire was to release his lord from this wretched solitude, this horrible misanthropy, so ill suited to his nature.

Cleopatra had kept him waiting two hours, but he would willingly have loitered in the anteroom thrice as long if she only determined to follow his counsel. It was worth considering, and Eros did not hesitate to give it. No one could foresee how Antony would greet Cleopatra herself, so he pro-

posed that she should send Charmian—not alone, but with her clever hunch-backed maid, to whom the Imperator himself had given the name "Aisopion." He liked Charmian, and could never see the dusky maid without jesting with her. If his master could once be induced to show a cheerful face to others besides himself, Eros, and perceived how much better it was to laugh than to lapse into sullen reverie and anger, much would be gained, and Charmian would do the rest, if she brought a loving message from her royal mistress.

Hitherto Cleopatra had not interrupted him; but when she expressed the opinion that a slave's nimble tongue would have little power to change the deep despondency of a man overwhelmed by the most terrible disaster, Eros waved his short, broad hand, saying:

"I trust your Majesty will pardon the frankness of a man so humble in degree, but those in high station often permit us to see what they hide from one another. Only the loftiest and the lowliest, the gods and the slaves, behold the great without disguise. May my ears be cropped if the Imperator's melancholy and misanthropy are so intense! All this is a disguise which pleases him. You know how, in better days, he enjoyed appearing as Dionysus, and with what wanton gaiety he played the part of the god. Now he is hiding his real, cheerful face behind the mask of unsocial melancholy, because he thinks the former does not

suit this time of misfortune. True, he often says things which make your skin creep, and frequently broods mournfully over his own thoughts. But this never lasts long when we are alone. If I come in with a very funny story, and he doesn't silence me at once, you can rely on his surpassing it with a still more comical one. A short time ago I reminded him of the fishing party when your Majesty had a diver fasten a salted herring on his hook. You ought to have heard him laugh, and exclaim what happy days those were. The lady Charmian need only remind him of them, and Aisopion spice the allusion with a jest. I'll give my nose—true, it's only a small one, but everybody values that feature most—if they don't persuade him to leave that horrible crow's nest in the middle of the sea. They must remind him of the twins and little Alexander; for when he permits me to talk about them his brow smooths most speedily. He still speaks very often to Lucilius and his other friends of his great plans of forming a powerful empire in the East, with Alexandria as its principal city. His warrior blood is not yet calm. A short time ago I was even ordered to sharpen the curved Persian scimitar he likes to wield. One could not know what service it might be, he said. Then he swung his mighty arm. By the dog! The grey-haired giant still has the strength of three youths. When he is once more with you, among warriors and battle chargers, all will be well."

"Let us hope so," replied Cleopatra kindly, and promised to follow his advice.

When Iras, who had taken Charmian's place, accompanied the Queen to her chamber after several hours of toil, she found her silent and sad. Lost in thought, she accepted her attendant's aid, breaking her silence only after she had gone to her couch. "This has been a hard day, Iras," she said; "it brought nothing save the confirmation of an old saying, perhaps the most ancient in the world: 'Every one will reap only what he sows. The plant which grows from the seed you place in the earth may be crushed, but no power in the world will compel the seed to develop differently or produce fruit unlike what Nature has assigned to it.' My seed was evil. This now appears in the time of harvest. But we will yet bring a handful of good wheat to the storehouses. We will provide for that while there is time. I will talk with Gorgias early to-morrow morning. While we were building, you showed good taste and often suggested new ideas. When Gorgias brings the plans for the mausoleum you shall examine them with me. You have a right to do so, for, if I am not mistaken, few will visit the finished structure more frequently than my Iras."

The girl started up and, raising her hand as if taking a vow, exclaimed: "Your tomb

will vainly wait my visit; your end will be mine also.

"May the gods preserve your youth from it!" replied the Queen in a tone of grave remonstrance. "We still live and will do battle."

CHAPTER XIX.

NIGHT brought little sleep to Cleopatra. Memory followed memory, plan was added to plan. The resolve made the day before was the right one. To-day she would begin its execution. Whatever might happen, she was prepared for every contingency.

Ere she went to her work she granted a second audience to the Roman envoy. Timagenes exerted all his powers of eloquence, skill in persuasion, wit, and ingenuity. He again promised to Cleopatra life and liberty, and to her children the throne; but when he insisted upon the surrender or death of Mark Antony as the first condition of any further negotiations, Cleopatra remained steadfast, and the ambassador set forth on his way home without any pledge.

After he had gone, the Queen and Iras looked over the plans for the tomb brought by Gorgias, but the intense agitation of her soul distracted Cleopatra's attention, and she begged him to come again at a later hour. When she was alone, she took out the letters which Cæsar and Antony had

written to her. How acute, subtle, and tender were those of the former; how ardent, impassioned, yet sincere were those of the mighty and fiery orator, whose eloquence swept the listening multitudes with him, yet whom her little hand had drawn wherever she desired!

Her heart throbbed faster when she thought of the meeting with Antony, now close at hand; for Charmian had gone with the Nubian to invite him to join her again. They had started several hours ago, and she awaited their return with increasing impatience. She had summoned him for their last mutual battle. That he would come she did not doubt. But could she succeed in rekindling his courage? Two persons so closely allied should sink and perish, still firmly united, in the final battle, if victory was denied.

Archibius was now announced.

It soothed her merely to gaze into the faithful countenance, which recalled so many of her happiest memories.

She opened her whole soul to him without reserve, and he drew himself up to his full height, as if restored to youth; while when she told him that she would never sully herself by treachery to her lover and husband, and had resolved to die worthy of her name, the expression of his eyes revealed that she had chosen the right path.

Ere she had made the request that he should undertake the education and guidance of the chil-

dren, he voluntarily proposed to devote his best powers to them. The plan of uniting Didymus's garden with the Lochias and giving it to the little ones also met with his approval. His sister had already told him that Cleopatra had determined to build her tomb. He hoped, he added, that its doors would not open to her for many years.

She shook her head sorrowfully, exclaiming: "Would that I could read every face as I do yours! My friend Archibius wishes me a long life, if any one does; but he is as wise as he is faithful, and therefore will consider that earthly life is by no means a boon in every case. Besides, he says to himself: 'Events are impending over this Queen and woman, my friend, which will perhaps render it advisable to make use of the great privilege which the immortals bestow on human beings when it becomes desirable for them to leave the stage of life. So let her build her tomb.' Have I read the old familiar book aright?"

"On the whole, yes," he answered gravely. "But it is inscribed upon its pages that a great princess and faithful mother can be permitted to set forth on the last journey, whence there is no return, only when——"

"When," she interrupted, "a shameful end threatens to fall upon the fair beginning and brilliant middle period, as a swarm of locusts darkens the air and devours and devastates the fields. I know it, and will act accordingly."

"And," added Archibius, "this end also (faithful to your nature) you will shape regally. On my way here I met my sister near the Choma. You sent her to your husband. He will grasp the proffered hand. Now that it is necessary to stake everything or surrender, the grandson of Herakles will again display his former heroic power. Perhaps, stimulated and encouraged by the example of the woman he loves, he will even force hostile Fate to show him fresh favour."

"Destiny will pursue its course," interrupted Cleopatra firmly. "But Antony must help me to heap fresh obstacles in the pathway, and when he wishes to use his giant strength, what masses of rock his mighty arm can hurl!"

"And if your lofty spirit smooths the path for him, then, my royal mistress——"

"Even then the close of the tragedy will be death, and every scene a disappointment. Was not the plan of bringing the fleet across the isthmus bold and full of promise? Even the professional engineers greeted it with applause, and yet it proved impracticable. Destiny dug its grave. And the terrible omens before and after Actium, and the stars—the stars! Everything points to speedy destruction, everything! Every hour brings news of the desertion of some prince or general. As if from a watch-tower, I now overlook what is growing from the seed I sowed. Sterile ears or poisonous vegetation, wherever I turn my eyes. And yet!

You, who know my life from its beginning, tell me—must I veil my head in shame when the question is asked, what powers of intellect, what talents, industry, and desire for good Cleopatra displayed ?"

"No, my royal mistress, a thousand times no !"

"Yet the fruit of every tree I planted degenerated and decayed. Cæsarion is withering in the flower of his youth—by whose fault I know only too well. You will now take charge of the education of the other children. So it is for you to consider what brought me where I now stand, and how to guard their life-bark from wandering and shipwreck."

"Let me train them to be human beings," replied Archibius gravely, "and preserve them from the desire to enter the lists with the gods. From the simple Cleopatra in the garden of Epicurus, who was a delight to the good and wise, you became the 'new Isis,' to whom the multitude raised hearts, eyes, and hands, dazzled and blinded. We will transfer the twins, Helios and Selene, the sun and the moon, from heaven to earth; they must become mortals—Greeks. I will not transplant them to the garden of Epicurus, but to another, where the air is more bracing. The inscription on its portals shall not be, 'Here pleasure is the chief good,' but 'This is an arena for character.' He who leaves this garden shall not owe to it the yearning for happiness and comfort, but an immovably steadfast moral discipline. Your children, like

yourself, were born in the East, which loves what is monstrous, superhuman, exaggerated. If you entrust them to me, they must learn to govern themselves. At the helm stands moral earnestness, which, however, does not exclude the joyous cheerfulness natural to our people; the sails will be trimmed by moderation, the noblest quality of the Greek nation."

"I understand," Cleopatra interrupted, with drooping head. "Interwoven with the means of securing the children's welfare, you set before the mother's eyes the qualities she has lacked. I know that long ago you abandoned the teachings of Epicurus and the Stoa, and with an earnest aim before your eyes sought your own paths. The tempest of life swept me far away from the quiet garden where we sought the purest delight. Now I have learned to know the perils which threaten those who see the chief good in happiness. It stands too high for mortals, for in the changeful stir of life it remains unattainable, and yet it is too low an aim for their struggles, for there are worthier objects. Yet one saying of Epicurus we both believed, and it has always stood us in good stead: 'Wisdom can obtain no more precious contribution to the happiness of mortal life than the possession of friendship.'"

She held out her hand as she spoke, and while, deeply agitated, he raised it to his lips, she went on: "You know I am on the eve of the last des-

perate battle—if the gods will—shoulder to shoulder with Antony. Therefore I shall not be permitted to watch your work of education; yet I will aid it. When the children question you about their mother, you will be obliged to restrain yourself from saying: 'Instead of striving for the painless peace of mind, the noble pleasure of Epicurus, which once seemed to her the highest good, she constantly pursued fleeting amusements. The Oriental recklessly squandered her once noble gifts of intellect and the wealth of her people, yielded to the hasty impulses of her passionate nature.' But you shall also say to them: 'Your mother's heart was full of ardent love, she scorned what was base, strove for the highest goal, and when she fell, preferred death to treachery and disgrace.'"

Here she paused, for she thought she heard footsteps approaching, and then exclaimed anxiously: "I am waiting—expecting. Perhaps Antony cannot escape from the paralyzing grasp of despair. To fight the last battle without him, and yet under the gaze of his wrathful, gloomy eyes, once so full of sunshine, would be the greatest sorrow of my life. Archibius, I may confess this to you, the friend who saw love for this man develop in the breast of the child—— But what does this mean? An uproar! Have the people rebelled? Yesterday the representatives of the priesthood, the members of the museum, and the leaders of the army assured me of their change-

less fidelity and love. Dion belonged to the Macedonian men of the Council; yet I have already declared, in accordance with the truth, that I never intended to persecute him on Cæsarion's account. I do not even know—and do not desire to know—the refuge of the lately wedded pair. Or has the new tax levied, the command to seize the treasures of the temple, driven them to extremities? What am I to do? We need gold to bid the foe defiance, to preserve the independence of the throne, the country, and the people. Or have tidings from Rome——? It is becoming serious—and the noise is growing louder."

"Let me see what they want," Archibius anxiously interrupted, hastening to the door; but just at that moment the Introducer opened it, crying, "Mark Antony is approaching the Lochias, attended by half Alexandria!"

"The noble Imperator is returning!" fell from the bearded lips of the commander of the guard, ere the courtier's words had died away; and even while he spoke Iras pressed past him, shrieking as if half frantic: "He is coming! He is here! I knew he would come! How they are shouting and cheering! Out with you, men! If you are willing, my royal mistress, we will greet him from the balcony of Berenike. If we only had——"

"The twins—little Alexander!" interrupted Cleopatra, with blanched face and faltering voice. "Put on their festal garments."

"Quick—the children, Zoe!" cried Iras, completing the order and clapping her hands. Then she turned to the Queen with the entreaty: "Be calm, my royal mistress, be calm, I beseech you. We have ample time. Here is the vulture crown of Isis, and here the other. Antony's slave, Eros, has just come in, panting for breath. The Imperator, he says, will appear as the new Dionysus. It would certainly please his master—though he had not commissioned him to request it—if you greeted him as the new Isis.—Help me, Hathor. Nephoris, tell the usher to see that the fan-bearers and the other attendants, women and men, are in their places.—Here are the pearl and diamond necklaces for your throat and bosom. Take care of the robe. The transparent bombyx is as delicate as a cobweb, and if you tear it—— No, you must not refuse. We all know how it pleases him to see his goddess in divine majesty and beauty."

Cleopatra, with glowing cheeks and throbbing heart, made no further objection to donning the superb festal robe, strewn with glimmering pearls and glittering gems. It would have been more in harmony with her feelings to meet the returning Antony in the plain, dark garb which, since her arrival at home, she had exchanged for a richer one only on festal occasions; but Antony was coming as the new Dionysus, and Eros knew what would please his master.

Eight nimble hands, which were often aided by

Iras's skilful fingers, toiled busily, and soon the latter could hold up the mirror before Cleopatra, exclaiming from the very depths of her heart, "Like the foam-born Aphrodite and the golden Hathor!"

Then Iras, who, in adorning her beloved mistress, had forgotten love, hate, and envy, and amid her eager haste barely found time for a brief, fervent prayer for a happy issue of this meeting, threw the broad folding-doors as wide as if she were about to reveal to the worshippers in the temple the image of the god in the innermost sanctuary.

A long, echoing shout of surprise and delight greeted the Queen, for the courtiers, hastily summoned, were already awaiting her without, from the grey-haired epistolograph to the youngest page. Regally attired women in her service raised the floating train of her cloak; others, in sacerdotal robes, were testing the ease of movement of the rings on the sistrum rods, men and boys were forming into lines according to the rank of each individual, and the chief fan-bearer gave the signal for departure. After a short walk through several halls and corridors, the train reached the first court-yard of the palace, and there ascended the few steps leading to the broad platform at the entrance-gate which overlooked the whole Bruchium and the Street of the King, down which the expected hero would approach.

The distant uproar of the multitude had sounded threatening, but now, amid the deafening din, they could distinguish every shout of welcome, every joyous greeting, every expression of delight, surprise, applause, admiration, and homage, known to the Greek and Egyptian tongues.

Only the centre and end of the procession were visible. The head had reached the Corner of the Muses, where, concealed by the old trees in the garden, it moved on between the Temple of Isis and the land owned by Didymus. The end still extended to the Choma, whence it had started.

All Alexandria seemed to have joined it.

Men large and small, of high and low degree, old and young, the lame and the crippled, mingled with the throng, sweeping onward among horses and carriages, carts and beasts of burden, like a mountain torrent dashing wildly down to the valley. Here a loud shriek rang from an overturned litter, whose bearers had fallen. Yonder a child thrown to the ground screamed shrilly, there a dog trodden under the feet of the crowd howled piteously. So clear and resonant were the shouts of joy that they rose high above the flutes and tambourines, the cymbals and lutes of the musicians, who followed the man approaching in the robes of a god.

The head of the procession now passed beyond the Corner of the Muses and came within view of the platform.

There could be no doubt to whom this ovation was given, for the returning hero was in the van, high above all the other figures. From the golden throne borne on the shoulders of twelve black slaves he waved his long thyrsus in greeting to the exulting multitude. Before the bacchanalian train which accompanied him, and behind the musicians who followed, moved two elephants bearing between them, as a light burden, some unrecognizable object covered with a purple cloth. Now the column had passed between the pylons through the lofty gateway which separated the palace from the Street of the King, and stopped opposite to the platform.

While officials, Scythians, and body-guards of all shades of complexion, on foot and on horseback, kept back the throng by force where friendly warning did not avail, Cleopatra saw her lover descend from the throne and give a signal to the Indian slave who guided the elephants. The cloth was flung aside, revealing to the astonished eyes of the spectators a bouquet of flowers such as no Alexandrian had ever beheld. It consisted entirely of blossoming rose-bushes. The red flowers formed a circle in the centre, surrounded by a broad light garland of white ones. The whole gigantic work rested like an egg in its cup in a holder of palm fronds which, as it were, framed it in graceful curving outlines. More than a thousand blossoms were united in this peerless bouquet,

and the singular gigantic gift was characteristic of its giver.

He advanced on foot to the platform, his figure towering above the brown, light-hued, and black freedmen and slaves who followed as, on the monuments of the Pharaohs, the image of the sovereign dominates those of the subjects and foes.

He could look down upon the tallest men, and the width of his shoulders was as remarkable as his colossal height. A long, gold-broidered purple mantle, floating to his ancles, increased his apparent stature. Powerful arms, with the swelling muscles of an athlete, were extended from his sleeveless robe towards the beloved Queen.

The well-formed head, thick dark hair, and magnificent beard corresponded with the powerful figure. Formerly these locks had adorned the head of the youth with the blue-black hue of the raven's plumage; now the threads of grey scattered abundantly through them were concealed by the aid of dye. A thick wreath of vine leaves rested on the Imperator's brow, and leafy vine branches, to which clung several dark bunches of grapes, fell over his broad shoulders and down his back, which was covered like a cloak, not by a leopard-skin, but that of a royal Indian tiger of great size—he had slain it himself in the arena. The head and paws of the animal were gold, the eyes two magnificent sparkling sapphires. The clasp of the

chain, by which the skin was suspended, as well as that of the gold belt which circled the Imperator's body above the hips, was covered with rubies and emeralds. The wide armlets above his elbows, the ornaments on his broad breast, nay, even his red morocco boots, glittered and flashed with gems.

Radiant as his former fortunes seemed the magnificent attire of this mighty fallen hero, who but yesterday had shrunk timidly and sadly from the eyes of his fellow-men. His features, too, were large, noble, and beautiful in outline; but, though his pale cheeks were adorned with the borrowed crimson of youth, half a century of the maddest pursuit of pleasure and the torturing excitement of the last few weeks had left traces only too visible; for the skin hung in loose bags beneath the large eyes; wrinkles furrowed his brow and radiated in slanting lines from the corners of his eyes across his temples.

Yet not one of those whom this bedizened man of fifty was approaching thought of seeing in him an aged, bedecked dandy; it was an instinct of his nature to surround himself with pomp and splendour and, moreover, his whole appearance was so instinct with power that scorn and mockery shrank abashed before it.

How frank, gracious, and kindly was this man's face, how sincere the heart-felt emotion which sparkled in his eyes, still glowing with the fire of

youth, at the sight of the woman from whom he had been so long parted! Every feature beamed with the most ardent tenderness for the royal wife whom he was approaching, and the expression on the lips of the giant varied so swiftly from humble, sorrowful anguish of mind to gratitude and delight, that even the hearts of his foes were touched. But when, pressing his hand on his broad breast, he advanced towards the Queen, bending so low that it seemed as if he would fain kiss her feet, when in fact the colossal figure did sink kneeling before her, and the powerful arms were outstretched with fervent devotion like a child beseeching help, the woman who had loved him throughout her whole life with all the ardour of her passionate soul was overpowered by the feeling that everything which stood between them, all their mutual offences, had vanished. He saw the sunny smile that brightened her beloved, ever-beautiful face, and then—then his own name reached his ears from the lips to which he owed the greatest bliss love had ever offered. At last, as if intoxicated by the tones of her voice, which seemed to him more musical than the songs of the Muses; half smiling at the jest which, even in the most serious earnest, he could not abandon; half moved to the depths of his soul by the power of his newly awakening happiness after such sore sorrow, he pointed to the gigantic bouquet, which three slaves had lifted down from the elephant and were bear-

ing to the Queen. Cleopatra, too, was overwhelmed with emotion.

This floral gift imitated, on an immense scale, the little bouquet which the famous young general had taken from her father's hand before the gate of the garden of Epicurus to present to her as his first gift. That had also been composed of red roses, surrounded by white ones. Instead of palm fronds, it had been encircled only by fern leaves. This was one of the beautiful offerings which Antony's gracious nature so well understood how to choose. The bouquet was a symbol of the unprecedented generosity natural to this large-minded man. No magic goblet had compelled him to approach her thus and with such homage. Nothing had constrained him, save his overflowing heart, his constant, fadeless love.

As if restored to youth, transported by some magic spell to the happy days of early girlhood, she forgot her royal dignity and the hundreds of eyes which rested upon him as if spell-bound; and, obedient to an irresistible impulse of the heart, she sank upon the broad, heaving breast of the kneeling hero. Laughing joyously in the clear, silvery tones which are usually heard only in youth, he clasped her in his strong arms, raised her slender figure in its floating royal mantle from the ground, kissed her lips and eyes, held her aloft in the soaring attitude of the Goddess of Victory, as if to display his happiness to the eyes of all, and

at last placed her carefully on her feet again like some treasured jewel.

Then, turning to the children, who were waiting at their mother's side, he lifted first little Alexander, then the twins, to kiss them; and, while holding Helios and Selene in his arms, as if the joy of seeing them again had banished their weight, the shouts which had arisen when the Queen sank on his breast again burst forth.

The ancient walls of the Lochias palace had never heard such acclamations. They passed from lip to lip, from hundreds to hundreds and, though those more distant did not know the cause, they joined in the shouts. Along the whole vast stretch from the Lochias to the Choma the cheers rang out like a single, heart-stirring, inseparable cry, echoing across the harbour, the ships lying at anchor, the towering masts, to the cliff amid the sea where Barine was nursing her new-made husband.

CHAPTER XX.

The property of the freedman Pyrrhus was a flat rock in the northern part of the harbour, scarcely larger than the garden of Didymus at the Corner of the Muses, a desolate spot where neither tree nor blade of grass grew. It was called the Serpent Island, though the inhabitants had long since rid it of these dangerous guests, which lived in great numbers in the neighbouring cliffs. Not even the poorest crops would grow in soil so hostile to life, and those who chose it for a home were compelled to bring even the drinking-water from the continent.

This desert, around which hovered gulls, sea-swallows, and sea-eagles, had been for several weeks the abode of the fugitives, Dion and Barine. They still occupied the two rooms which had been assigned to them on their arrival. During the day the sun beat fiercely down upon the yellow chalky rock. There was no shade save in the house and at the foot of a towering cliff in the southern part of the island, the fishermen's watch-tower.

There were no works of human hands save a

little Temple of Poseidon, an altar of Isis, the large house owned by Pyrrhus, solidly constructed by Alexandrian masons, and a smaller one for the freedman's married sons and their families. A long wooden frame, on which nets were strung to dry, rose on the shore. Near it, towards the north, in the open sea, was the anchorage of the larger sea-going ships and the various skiffs and boats of the fisher folk. Dionikos, Pyrrhus's youngest son, who was still unmarried, built new boats and repaired the old ones.

His two strong, taciturn brothers, with their wives and children, his father Pyrrhus, his wife and their youngest child, a daughter, Dione, a few dogs, cats, and chickens, composed the population of the Serpent Island.

Such were the surroundings of the newly wedded pair, who had been reared in the capital. At first many things were strange to them, but they accommodated themselves to circumstances with a good grace, and both had admitted to each other, long before, that life had never been so equable and peaceful.

During the first week Dion's wound and fever still harassed him, but the prediction of Pyrrhus that the pure, fresh sea-air would benefit the sufferer had been fulfilled, and the monotonous days had passed swiftly enough to the young bride in caring for the invalid.

The wife of Pyrrhus—"mother," as they all

called her—had proved to be a skilful nurse, and her daughters-in-law and young Dione were faithful and nimble assistants. During the time of anxiety and nursing, Barine had formed a warm friendship for them. If the taciturn men avoided using a single unnecessary word, the women were all the more ready to gossip; and it was a pleasure to talk to pretty Dione, who had grown up on the island and was eager to hear about the outside world.

Dion had long since left his couch and the house, and each day looked happier, more content with himself and his surroundings. At first his feverish visions had shown him his dead mother, pointing anxiously at his new-made wife, as if to warn him against her. During his convalescence he remembered them and they conjured up the doubt whether Barine could endure the solitude of this desolate cliff, whether she would not lose the bright serenity of soul whose charm constantly increased. Would it be any marvel if she should pine with longing in this solitude, and even suffer physically from their severe privations?

The perception that love now supplied the place of all which she had lost pleased him, but he forbade himself to expect that this condition of affairs could be lasting. Nothing save exaggerated self-conceit would induce the hope. But he must have undervalued his own power of attraction—or Barine's love—for with each passing week the cheerful serenity of her disposition gained fresh stead-

fastness and charm. He, too, had the same experience; it was long since he had felt so vigorous, untrammelled, and free from care. His sole regret was the impossibility of sharing the political life of the city at this critical period; and at times he felt some little anxiety concerning the fate and management of his property, though, even if his estates were confiscated, he would still retain a competence which he had left in the hands of a trustworthy money-changer. Barine shared everything that concerned him, even these moods, and this led him to tell her about the affairs of the city and the state, in which she had formerly taken little interest, his property in Alexandria and the provinces. With what glad appreciation she listened, when she went out with him from the northern anchorage on the open sea, or sat during long winter evenings making nets, an art which she had learned from Dione!

Her lute had been sent to her from the city, and what pleasure her singing afforded her husband and herself; how joyously their hosts, old and young, listened to the melody!

A few book-rolls had also come, and Dion enjoyed discussing their contents with Barine. He himself read very little, for he was rarely indoors during the day. The fourth week after his arrival he was able to aid, with arms whose muscles had been steeled in the palæstra, the men in their fishing, and Dionikos in his boat-building.

The close, constant, uninterrupted companionship of the married pair revealed to each unexpected treasures in the other, which, perhaps, might have remained forever concealed in city life. Here each was everything to the other, and this undisturbed mutual life soon inspired that blissful consciousness of inseparable union which usually appears only after years, as the fairest fruit of a marriage founded on love.

Doubtless there were hours when Barine longed to see her mother and others who were dear to her, but the letters which arrived from time to time prevented this yearning from becoming a source of actual pain.

Prudence required them to restrict their intercourse with the city. But, whenever Pyrrhus went to market, letters reached the island delivered at the fish auction in the harbour by Anukis, Charmian's Nubian maid, to the old freedman, who had become her close friend.

So the time came when Dion could say without self-deception that Barine was content in this solitude, and that his love and companionship supplied the place of the exciting, changeful life of the capital. Though letters came from her mother, sister, or Charmian, her grandfather, Gorgias, or Archibius, not one transformed the wish to leave her desolate hiding-place into actual homesickness, but each brought fresh subjects for conversation, and among them many which, by

arousing the interest of both, united them more firmly.

The second month of their flight a letter arrived from Archibius, in which he informed them that they might soon form plans for their return, for Alexas, the Syrian, had proved a malicious traitor. He had not performed the commission entrusted to him of winning Herod to Antony's cause, but treacherously deserted his patron and remained with the King of the Jews. When, with unprecedented shamelessness, he sought Octavianus to sell the secrets of his Egyptian benefactor, he was arrested and executed in his own home, Laodicea.

Now, their friend continued, Cleopatra's eyes as well as her husband's were opened to the true character of Barine's most virulent accuser. The influence of Philostratus, too, was of course destroyed by his brother's infamous deed. Yet they must wait a little longer; for Cæsarion had joined the Ephebi, and Antyllus had been invested with the *toga virilis*. They could now undertake many things independently, and Cæsarion often made remarks which showed that he would not cease to lay plots for Barine.

Dion feared nothing from the royal boy on his own account, but for his wife's sake he dared not disregard his friend's warning. This was hard; for though he still felt happy on the island, he longed to install the woman he loved in his own house, and every impulse of his nature urged him

to be present at the meetings of the Council in these fateful times. Therefore he was more than ready to risk returning to the city, but Barine entreated him so earnestly not to exchange the secure happiness they enjoyed here for a greater one, behind which might lurk the heaviest misfortune, that he yielded. Another letter from Charmian soon proved the absolute necessity of continuing to exercise caution.

Even from the island they could perceive that everything known as festal pleasure was rife in Alexandria, and bore along in its mad revelry the court and the citizens. When the wind blew from the south, it brought single notes of inspiring music or indistinct sounds of the wildest popular rejoicing.

The fisherman's daughter, Dione, often called them to the strand to admire the galleys adorned with fabulous splendour, garlanded with flowers, and echoing with the music of lutes and the melody of songs. Sails of purple embroidered silk bore the vessels over the smooth tide. Once the watchers even distinguished, upon a barge richly adorned with gilded carving, young female slaves who, with floating hair and transparent sea-green robes, handled, in the guise of Nereids, light sandal-wood oars with golden blades. Often the breeze bore to the island the perfumes which surrounded the galleys, and on calm nights the magnificent ships, surrounded by the magical illumination of many-hued lamps,

swept across the mirror-like surface of the waves. Among the voyagers were gods, goddesses, and heroes who, standing or reclining in beautiful groups, represented scenes from the myths and history. On the deck of the Queen's superb vessel guests crowned with wreaths lay on purple couches, under garlands of flowers, eating choice viands and draining golden wine-cups.

On other nights the illumination of the shore of the Bruchium rendered it as bright as day. The huge dome of the Serapeum on the Rhakotis, covered with lamps, towered above the flat roofs of the city like the starry firmament of a smaller world which had descended to earth. Every temple and palace was transformed into a giant candelabrum, and the rows of lamps on the quay stretched like tendrils of light from the dazzlingly illuminated marble Temple of Poseidon to the palace at Lochias, steeped in radiance.

When Pyrrhus or one of his sons returned from market they described the festivals and shows, banquets, races, and endless pleasure excursions arranged by the court, which made the citizens fairly hold their breath. It was a prosperous time for the fishermen; the Queen's cooks took all their wares and paid a liberal price.

January had come, when another letter arrived from Charmian. Dion and Barine had watched in vain for any unusual events on Cleopatra's birthday, but on Antony's, a few days later, there was

plenty of music and shouting, and in the evening an unusually magnificent illumination.

Two days after, this letter was delivered to Pyrrhus by his dusky friend Anukis.

Her inquiry whether he thought it prudent to convey visitors to his guests was answered in the negative, for since Octavianus had been in Asia, the harbour swarmed with the boats of spies, and a single act of imprudence might bring ruin.

Charmian's letter, too, was even better calculated to curb Dion's increasing desire to return home than the fisherman's warning.

True, the beginning contained good news of Barine's relatives, and then informed Dion that his uncle, the Keeper of the Seal, was fairly revelling in bliss. His inventive gifts were taxed more than ever. Every day brought a festival, every night magnificent banquets. One spectacle, excursion, or hunting party followed another. In the theatres, the Odeum, the Hippodrome, no more brilliant performances, races, naval battles, gladiatorial struggles, and combats between beasts had been given, even before Actium. Dion himself had formerly attended the entertainments of those who belonged to the court circle, the society of "Inimitable Livers." It had been revived again, but Antony called them the "Comrades of Death."

This was significant. Every one knows that the end is drawing near, and imitates the Pharaoh to whom the oracle promised six years of life, and

who convicted it of falsehood and made them twelve by carousing during the night also.

The Queen's meeting with her husband, which she had previously reported, had been magnificent. "At that time," she wrote, "we hoped that a more noble life would begin, and Mark Antony, awakened and elevated by his rekindled love, would regain his former heroic power; but we were mistaken; Cleopatra, it is true, toiled unceasingly, but her lover with his enormous bunch of roses gave the signal for the maddest revelry which the imagination of the wildest devotee of pleasure could conceive. The performances of the Inimitable Livers were far surpassed by those of the "Comrades of Death."

"Antony is at their head, and he, whose giant frame resists even the most unprecedented demands, succeeds in stupefying himself and forgetting the impending ruin. When he comes to us after a night of revelry his eyes sparkle as brightly, his deep voice has as clear a ring, as at the beginning of the banquet. The Queen is his goddess; and who could remain unmoved when the giant bows obediently to the nod of his delicate sovereign, and devises and offers the most unprecedented things to win a smile from her lips? The changeful, impetuous wooing of youth lies far behind him, but his homage, which the Ephebi of today would perhaps term antiquated, has always seemed to me as if a mountain were bending be-

fore a star. The stranger who sees her in his company believes her a happy woman. Amid the fabulous radiance of the festal array, when all who surround her admire, worship, and strew flowers in her path, one might believe that the old sunny days had returned; but when we are alone, how rarely I see her smile! Then she plans for the tomb which, under Gorgias's direction, is rapidly rising, and considers with him the best method of rendering it an inaccessible place of retreat.

"She decided everything, down to the carving on the stone sarcophagi. In addition, there are to be rooms and chambers in the lower story for the reception of her treasures. Beneath them she has had corridors made for the pitch and straw which, if the worst should come, are to be lighted. She will then give to the flames the gold and silver, gems and jewels, ebony and ivory, the costly spices—in short, all her valuables. The pearls alone are worth many kingdoms. Who can blame her if she prefers to destroy them rather than leave them for the foe?

"The garden in which you grew up, Barine, is now the scene of the happy, busy life led by Alexander and the twins. There, under my brother's guidance, they frolic, build, and dig. Cleopatra goes to it whenever she longs for repose after the pursuit of pleasures which have lost their zest.

"When, the day before yesterday, Antony, crowned with ivy as the new Dionysus, drove up

the Street of the King in the golden chariot drawn by tamed lions, to bring her, the new Isis, from the Lochias in a lotus flower made of silver and white paste, drawn by four snow-white steeds, she pointed to the glittering train and said: 'Between the quiet of the philosopher's garden, where I began my life and still feel most at ease, and the grave, where nothing disturbs my last repose, stretches the Street of the King, with this deafening tumult, this empty splendour. It is mine.'

"O child, it was very different in former days! She loved Mark Antony with passionate ardour. He was the first man in the world, and yet he bowed before the supremacy of her will. The longing of the awakening heart, the burning ambition which already kindled the soul of the child, had alike found satisfaction, and the world beheld how the mortal woman, Cleopatra, for her lover and herself, could steep this meagre life with the joys of the immortals. He was grateful for them, and the most generous of men laid at the feet of the 'Great Queen of the East' the might of Rome and the kings of two quarters of the globe.

"These years were spent by both in one long revel. His marriage with Octavia brought the first awakening. It was hard and painful. He had not deserted Cleopatra for a woman's sake, but on account of his endangered power and sovereignty. But the unloved Octavia constrained

him to look up to her with respectful admiration—nay, she became dear to him.

"A fierce battle for him and his heart arose between the two. It was fought with very different weapons, and Cleopatra conquered. The revel, the dream began again. Then came Actium, the disenchantment, the awakening, the fall, the flight from the world. Our object was not to let him relapse into intoxication, to rouse the hero's strength and courage from their slumber, render him for love's sake a fellow-combatant in the common cause.

"But he had become accustomed to see in her the giver of ecstasy. The only thing that he still desired was to drain the cup of pleasure in her society till all was over. She sees this, grieves over it, and leaves no means of rousing him to fresh energy untried; yet how rarely he rallies his powers to earnest labour!

"While she is fortifying the mouths of the Nile and the frontiers of the country, building ship after ship, arming and negotiating, she can not resist him when he summons her to new pleasures.

"Though so many of the traits which rendered him great and noble have vanished, she can not give up the old love and clings steadfastly to him because, because—I know not why. A woman's loving heart does not question motives and laws. Besides, he is the father of her children and, in

playing with them, he regains the old joyousness of mood so enthralling to the heart.

"Since Archibius has taken charge of them, they can dispense with Euphronion, their tutor. The clever man knows Rome, Octavianus, and those who surround him, so he was chosen as an envoy. His object was to induce the conqueror to transfer the sovereignty of Egypt to the boys Antonius Helios, and Alexander, but Cæsar vouchsafed no answer to the mediator in Antony's affairs —nay, did not even grant him an audience.

"To Cleopatra Octavianus promised friendly treatment, and the fulfilment of her wish concerning the boys if—and now came the repetition of the old demand—she would put Antony out of the world or deliver him into his hands.

"This demand, which contains base treachery, was impossible for her noble soul. Since she had resolved to build the tomb, granting it became impossible, yet Octavianus made every effort to tempt her to the base deed. True, the death of this one man would have spared much bloodshed. The Cæsar knows how to choose his tools. He sent here as negotiator a clever young man, who possessed great charms of mind and person. No plan to prejudice the Queen against her husband and persuade her to commit the treachery was left untried. He went so far as to assure Cleopatra that in former years she had won the Cæsar's heart, and that he still loved her. She accepted

these assurances at their true value and remained steadfast.

"Antony at first paid no heed to the intriguer. But when he learned what means he employed, and especially how he made use of the surrender of one of Cæsar's murderers, which he himself had long regretted, to brand him as an ungrateful traitor, he would not have been Mark Antony if he had accepted it quietly. He was completely his old self when he ordered the smooth fellow—who, however, had come as the ambassador of the mighty victor—to be scourged, sent him back to Rome, and wrote a letter to Octavianus, in which he complained of the man's arrogance and presumption, adding—spite of my heavy heart I can not help smiling when I think of it—that misfortune had rendered him unusually irritable; yet if his action perhaps displeased Cæsar, he might treat his freedman Hipparchus, who was in his power, as he had served Thyrsus!

"You see that his gay arrogance has not deserted him. Trouble slips away from him as rain is shaken from the coarse military cloak which he wore in the Parthian war, and therefore it cannot exert its purifying power.

"When we consider that, a few years ago, this man, as it were, doubled himself when peril was most threatening, his conduct now, on the eve of the decisive struggle, is intelligible only to those who know him as we do. If he fights, he will no

longer do so to save himself, or even to conquer, but to die an honourable death. If he still enjoys the pleasures offered, he believes that he can thus mitigate for himself the burden of defeat, and diminish the grandeur of the conqueror's victory. In the eyes of the world, at least, a man who can still revel like Antony is only half vanquished. Yet the lofty tone of his mind was lowered. The surrender of the murderer of Cæsar—his name was Turullius—proves it.

"And this, Barine—tell your husband so—this is what fills me with anxiety and compels me to entreat you not to think of returning home yet.

"Antony is now the jovial companion of his son, and permits Antyllus to share all his own pleasures. Of course, he heard of Cæsarion's passion, and is disposed to help the poor fellow. He has often said that nothing would better serve to rouse the dreamer from torpor than your charming vivacity. As the earth could scarcely have swallowed you up, you would be found; he, too, should be glad to hear you sing again. I know that search will be made for you.

"How imperiously this state of affairs requires you to exercise caution needs no explanation. On the other hand, you may find comfort in the tidings that Cleopatra intends to send Cæsarion with his tutor Rhodon to Ethiopia, by way of the island of Philæ. Archibius heard through Timagenes that Octavianus considers the son of Cæsar, whose face

so wonderfully resembles his father's, a dangerous person, and this opinion is the boy's death-warrant. Antyllus, too, is going on a journey. His destination is Asia, where he is to seek to propitiate Octavianus and make him new offers. As you know, he was betrothed to his daughter Julia. The Queen ceased long ago to believe in the possibility of victory, yet, spite of all the demands of the "Comrades of Death" and her own cares, she toils unweariedly in preparing for the defence of the country. She is doubtless the only member of that society who thinks seriously of the approaching end.

"Now that the tomb is rising, she ponders constantly upon death. She, who was taught by Epicurus to strive for freedom from pain and is so sensitive to the slightest bodily suffering, is still seeking a path which, with the least agony, will lead to the eternal rest for which she longs. Iras and the younger pupils of Olympus are aiding her. The old man furnishes all sorts of poisons, which she tries upon various animals—nay, recently even on criminals sentenced to death. All these experiments seem to prove that the bite of the uræus serpent, whose image on the Egyptian crown symbolizes the sovereign's instant power over life and death, stills the heart most swiftly and with the least suffering.

"How terrible these things are! What pain it causes to see the being one loves most, the mother of the fairest children, so cruelly heighten the an-

guish of parting, choose death, as it were, for a constant companion, amid the whirl of the gayest amusements! She daily looks all his terrors in the face, yet with proud contempt turns her back upon the bridge which might perhaps enable her for a time to escape the monster. This is grand, worthy of her, and never have I loved her more tenderly.

"You, too, must think of her kindly. She deserves it. A noble heart which sees itself forced to pity a foe, easily forgives; and was she ever your enemy?

"I have written a long, long letter to solace your seclusion from the world and relieve my own heart. Have patience a little while longer. The time is not far distant when Fate itself will release you from exile. How often your relatives, Archibius and Gorgias, whom I now see frequently in the presence of the Queen, long to visit you!—but they, too, believe that it might prove a source of danger."

The warnings in this letter were confirmed by another from Archibius, and soon after they heard that Cæsarion had really sailed up the Nile for Ethiopia with his tutor Rhodon, and Antyllus had been sent to Asia to visit Octavianus. The latter had received him, it is true; but sent him home without making any pledges.

These tidings were not brought by letter, but by Gorgias himself, whose visit surprised them one evening late in March.

Rarely had a guest received a more joyous welcome. When he entered the bare room, Barine was making a net and telling the fisherman's daughter Dione the story of the wanderings of Ulysses. Dion, too, listened attentively, now and then correcting or explaining her descriptions, while carving a head of Poseidon for the prow of a newly built boat.

As Gorgias unexpectedly crossed the threshold, the dim light of the lamp fed by kiki-oil seemed transformed into sunshine. How brightly their eyes sparkled, how joyous were their exclamations of welcome and surprise! Then came questions, answers, news! Gorgias was obliged to share the family supper, which had only waited the return of the father who had brought the guest.

The fresh oysters, langustæ, and other dishes served tasted more delicious to the denizen of the city than the most delicious banquets of the "Comrades of Death" to which he was now frequently invited by the Queen.

All that Pyrrhus said voluntarily and told his sons in reply to their questions was so sensible and related to matters which, because they were new to Gorgias, seemed so fascinating that, when Dion's good wine was served, he declared that if Pyrrhus would receive him he, too, would search for pursuers and be banished here.

When the three again sat alone before the plain clay mixing vessel it seemed to the lonely

young couple as if the best part of the city life which they had left behind had found its way to them, and what did they not have to say to one another! Dion and Barine talked of their hermit life, Gorgias of the Queen and the tomb, which was at the same time a treasure chamber. The slanting walls were built as firmly as if they were intended to last for centuries and defy a violent assault. The centre of the lower story was formed by a lofty hall of vast dimensions, in whose midst were the large marble sarcophagi. Men were working busily upon the figures in relief intended for the decoration of the sides and lids. This hall, whose low arched ceiling was supported by three pairs of heavy columns, was furnished like a reception-room. The couches, candelabra, and altars were already being made. Charmian had kept the fugitives well informed. In the subterranean chambers at the side of the hall, and in the second story, which could not be commenced until the ceiling was completed, store-rooms were to be made, and below and beside them were passages for ventilation and the storage of combustible materials.

Gorgias regretted that he could not show his friend the hall, which was perhaps the handsomest and most costly he had ever created. The noblest material—brown porphyry, emerald-green serpentine, and the dark varieties of marble—had been used, and the mosaic and brass doors, which were nearing completion, were masterpieces of Alexan-

drian art. To have all this destroyed was a terrible thought, but even more unbearable was that of its object—to receive the body of the Queen.

Again rapturous admiration of this greatest and noblest of women led Gorgias to enthusiastic rhapsodies, until Dion exercised his office of soberer, and Barine asked tidings of her mother, her grandparents, and her sister. There was nothing but good news to be told. True, the architect had to wage a daily battle with the old philosopher, who termed it an abuse of hospitality to remain so long at his friend's with his whole family; but thus far Gorgias had won the victory, even against Berenike, who wished to take her father and his household to her own home.

Cleopatra had purchased the house and garden of Didymus at thrice their value, the architect added. He was now a wealthy man, and had commissioned him to build a new mansion. The land facing the sea and near the museum had been found, but the handsome residence would not be completed until summer. The dry Egyptian air would have permitted him to roof it sooner, but there were many of Helena's wishes—most of them very sensible ones—to be executed.

Barine and Dion glanced significantly at each other; but the architect, perceiving it, exclaimed: "Your mute language is intelligible enough, and I confess that for five months Helena has seemed to

me the most attractive of maidens. I see, too, that she has some regard for me. But as soon as I stand before *her*—the Queen, I mean—and hear her voice, it seems as if a tempest swept away every thought of Helena, and it is not in my nature to deceive any one. How can I woo a girl whom I so deeply honour—your sister, Barine—when the image of another rules my soul?"

Dion reminded him of his own words that the Queen was loved only as a goddess and, without waiting for his reply, turned the conversation to other topics.

It was three hours after midnight when Pyrrhus warned Gorgias that it was time for departure. When the fisherman's fleetest boat was at last bearing him back to the city he wondered whether girls who, before marriage, lived like Helena in undisturbed seclusion, would really be better wives and more content with every lot than the much-courted Barine, whom Dion had led from the gayest whirl of life in the capital to the most desolate solitude.

This delightful evening was followed by a day of excitement and grave anxiety. It had been necessary to conceal the young couple from the collector's officials, who took from Pyrrhus part of his last year's savings, and the large new boat which he used to go out on the open sea. The preparations for war required large sums; all vessels suitable for the purpose were seized for the

fleet, and all residents of the city and country shared the same fate as Pyrrhus.

Even the temple treasures were confiscated, and yet no one could help saying to himself that the vast sums which, through these pitiless extortions, flowed into the treasury, were used for the pleasures of the court as well as for the equipment of the fleet and the army.

Yet so great was the people's love for the Queen, so high their regard for the independence of Egypt, so bitter their hate of Rome, that there was no rebellion.

How earnestly Cleopatra, amid all the extravagant revels, from which she could not too frequently absent herself, toiled to advance the military preparations, could be seen even by the exiles from their cliff; for work in two dock-yards was continued day and night, and the harbour was filled with vessels. Ships of war were continually moving to and fro, and from the Serpent Island they witnessed constantly, often by starlight, the drilling of the oarsmen and of whole squadrons upon the open sea. Sometimes a magnificent state galley appeared, on whose deck was Antony, who inspected the hastily equipped fleet to make the newly recruited sailors one of those kindling speeches in which he was a master hard to surpass. Two sons of Pyrrhus were now numbered in the crews of the recently built war ships. They had been impressed into the service in April, and

though Dion had placed a large sum at their father's disposal to secure their release, the attempt was unsuccessful.

So there had been sorrow and tears in the contented little colony of human beings on the lonely cliff, and when Dionysus and Dionichos had a day's leave of absence to visit their relatives, they complained of the cruel haste with which the young men were drilled and wearied to exhaustion, and spoke of the sons of citizens and peasants who had been dragged from their villages, their parents, and their business to be trained for seamen. There was great indignation among them, and they listened only too readily to the agitators who whispered how much better they would have fared on the galleys of Octavianus.

Pyrrhus entreated his sons not to join any attempt at mutiny; the women, on the contrary, would have approved anything which promised to release the youths from their severe service, and their bright cheerfulness was transformed into anxious depression. Barine, too, was no longer the same. She had lost her joyous activity, her eyes were often wet with tears, and she moved with drooping head as if some heavy care oppressed her.

Was it the heat of April, with its desert winds, which had brought the transformation? Had longing for the changeful, exciting life of former days at last overpowered her? Was solitude becoming

unendurable? Was her husband's love no longer sufficient to replace the many pleasures she had sacrificed?—No! It could not be that; never had she gazed with more devoted tenderness into Dion's face than when entirely alone with him in shady nooks. She who in such hours looked the very embodiment of happiness and contentment, certainly was neither ill nor sorrowful.

Dion, on the contrary, held his head high early and late, and appeared as proud and self-conscious as though life was showing him its fairest face. Yet he had heard that his estates had been sequestrated, and that he owed it solely to the influence of Archibius and his uncle, that his property, like that of so many others, had not been added to the royal treasures. But what disaster could he not have speedily vanquished in these days?

A great joy—the greatest which the immortals can bestow upon human beings—was dawning for him and his young wife, and in May the women on the island shared her blissful hope.

Pyrrhus brought from the city an altar and a marble statue of Ilythyia, the Goddess of Birth, called by the Romans Lucina, which his friend Anukis had given him, in Charmian's name, for the young wife. She had again spoken of the serpents which lived in such numbers in the neighbouring islands, and her question whether it would be difficult to capture one alive was answered by the freedman in the negative.

The image of the goddess and the altar were erected beside the other sanctuaries, and how often the stone was anointed by Barine and the women of the fisherman's family!

Dion vowed to the goddess a beautiful temple on the cliff and in the city if she would be gracious to his beloved young wife.

When, in June, the noonday sun blazed most fiercely, the fisherman brought to the cliff Helena, Barine's sister, and Chloris, Dion's nurse, who had been a faithful assistant of his mother, and afterwards managed the female slaves of the household.

How joyously and gratefully Barine held out her arms to her sister! Her mother had been prevented from coming only by the warning that her disappearance would surely attract the attention of the spies. And the latter were very alert; for Mark Antony had not yet given up the pursuit of the singer, nor had the attorney Philostratus recalled the proclamation offering two talents for the capture of Dion, and both the latter's palace and Berenike's house were constantly watched.

It seemed more difficult for the quiet Helena to accommodate herself to this solitude than for her gayer-natured sister. Plainly as she showed her love for Barine, she often lapsed into reverie, and every evening she went to the southern side of the cliff and gazed towards the city, where her grandparents doubtless sorely missed her, spite of the

careful attention bestowed upon them in Gorgias's house.

Eight days had passed since her arrival, and life in this wilderness seemed more distasteful than on the first and the second; the longing for her grandparents, too, appeared to increase; for that day she had gone to the shore, even under the burning rays of the noonday sun, to gaze towards the city.

How dearly she loved the old people!

But Dion's conjecture that the tears sparkling in Helena's eyes when she entered their room at dusk were connected with another resident of the capital, spite of his wife's indignant denial, appeared to be correct; for, a short time after, clear voices were heard in front of the house, and when a deep, hearty laugh rang out, Dion started up, exclaiming, "Gorgias never laughs in that way, except when he has had some unusual piece of good fortune!"

He hurried out as he spoke, and gazed around; but, notwithstanding the bright moonlight, he could see nothing except Father Pyrrhus on his way back to the anchorage.

But Dion's ears were keen, and he fancied he heard subdued voices on the other side of the dwelling. He followed the sound without delay and, when he turned the corner of the building, stopped short in astonishment, exclaiming as a low cry rose close before him:

"Good-evening, Gorgias! I'll see you later. I won't interrupt you."

A few rapid steps took him back to Barine, and as he whispered, "I saw Helena out in the moonlight, soothing her longing for her grandparents in Gorgias's arms," she clapped her hands and said, smiling:

"That's the way one loses good manners in this solitude. To disturb the first meeting of a pair of lovers! But Gorgias treated us in the same way in Alexandria, so he is now paid in his own coin."

The architect soon entered the room, with Helena leaning on his arm. Hour by hour he had missed her more and more painfully, and on the eighth day found it impossible to endure life's burden longer without her. He now protested that he could approach her mother and grandparents as a suitor with a clear conscience; for on the third day after Helena's departure the relation between him and the Queen had changed. In Cleopatra's presence the image of the granddaughter of Didymus became even more vivid than that of the peerless sovereign had formerly been in Helena's. Outside of the pages of poetry he had never experienced longing like that which had tortured him during the past few days.

CHAPTER XXI.

This time the architect could spend only a few hours on the Serpent Island, for affairs in the city were beginning to wear a very serious aspect, and the building of the monument was pushed forward even during the night. The interior of the first story was nearly completed and the rough portion of the second was progressing. The mosaic workers, who were making the floor of the great hall, had surpassed themselves. It was impossible to wait longer for the sculptures which were to adorn the walls. At present slabs of polished black marble were to occupy the places intended for bronze reliefs; the utmost haste was necessary.

Octavianus had already reached Pelusium; even if Seleukus, the commander of the garrison, held the strong fortress a long time, a part of the hostile army might appear before Alexandria the following week.

A considerable force, however, was ready to meet him. The fleet seemed equal to that of the enemy; the horsemen whom Antony had led before the Queen would delight the eye of any one versed

in military affairs; and the Imperator hoped much from the veterans who had served under him in former times, learned to know his generosity and open hand in the hour of prosperity, and probably had scarcely forgotten the eventful days when he had cheerfully and gaily shared their perils and privations.

Helena remained on the cliff, and her longing for the old couple had materially diminished. Her hands moved nimbly, and her cheerful glance showed that the lonely life on the island was beginning to unfold its charms to her.

The young husband, however, had grown very uneasy. He concealed it before the women, but old Pyrrhus often had much difficulty in preventing his making a trip to the city which might imperil, on the eve of the final decision, the result of their long endurance and privation. Dion had often wished to set sail with his wife for a great city in Syria or Greece, but fresh and mighty obstacles had deterred him. A special danger lay in the fact that every large vessel was thoroughly searched before it left the harbour, and it was impossible to escape from it without passing through the narrow straits east of the Pharos or the opening in the Heptastadium, both of which were easily guarded. The calm moderation that usually distinguished the young counsellor had been transformed into feverish restlessness, and the heart of his faithful old monitor had also lost

its poise; for an encounter between the fleet in which his sons served and that of Octavianus was speedily expected.

One day he returned from the city greatly excited. Pelusium was said to have fallen.

When he ascended the cliff he found everything quiet. No one, not even Dione, came to meet him.

What had happened here?

Had the fugitives been discovered and dragged with his family to the city to be thrown into prison, perhaps sent to the stone quarries?

Deadly pale, but erect and composed, he walked towards the house. He owed to Dion and his father the greatest blessing in life, liberty, and the foundation of everything else he possessed. But if his fears were verified, if he was bereft of friends and property, even as a lonely beggar he might continue to enjoy his freedom. If, for the sake of those to whom he owed his best possession, he must surrender the rest, it was his duty to bear fate patiently.

It was still light.

Even when he had approached very near the house he heard no sound save the joyous barking of his wolf-hound, Argus, which leaped upon him.

He now laid his hand upon the lock of the door—but it was flung open from the inside.

Dion had seen him coming and, enraptured by the new happiness with which this day had blessed

him, he flung himself impetuously on the breast of his faithful friend, exclaiming: "A boy, a splendid boy! We will call him Pyrrhus."

Bright tears of joy streamed down the freedman's face and fell on his grey beard; and when his wife came towards him with her finger on her lips, he whispered in a tremulous voice: "When I brought them here you were afraid that the city people would drag us into ruin, but nevertheless you received them as they deserved to be, and—he's going to name him Pyrrhus—and now!—What has a poor fellow like me done to have such great and beautiful blessings fall to my lot?"

"And I—I?" sobbed his wife. "And the child, the darling little creature!"

This day of sunny happiness was followed by others of quiet joy, of the purest pleasure, yet mingled with the deepest anxiety. They also brought many an hour in which Helena found an opportunity to show her prudence, while old Chloris and the fisherman's wife aided her by their experience.

Every one, down to the greybeard whose name the little one bore, declared that there had never been a lovelier young mother than Barine or a handsomer child than the infant Pyrrhus; but Dion could no longer endure to remain on the cliff.

A thousand things which he had hitherto deemed insignificant and allowed to pass unheeded

now seemed important and imperatively in need of his personal attention. He was a father, and any negligence might be harmful to his son.

With his bronzed complexion and long hair and beard he required little aid to disguise him from his friends. In the garments shabby by long use, and with his delicate hands calloused by work in the dock-yard, any one would have taken him for a real fisherman.

Perhaps it was foolish, but the desire to show himself in the character of a father to Barine's mother and grandparents and to Gorgias seemed worth risking a slight danger; so, without informing Barine, who was now able to walk about her room, he set out for the city after sunset on the last day of July.

He knew that Octavianus was encamped in the Hippodrome east of Alexandria. The white mounds which had risen there had been recognized as tents, even from the Serpent Island. Pyrrhus had returned in the afternoon with tidings that Antony's mounted troops had defeated those of Octavianus. This time the news of victory could be trusted, for the palace at Lochias was illuminated for a festival and when Dion landed there was a great bustle on the quay. One shouted to another that all would be well. Mark Antony was his old self again. He had fought like a hero.

Many who yesterday had cursed him, to-day mingled their voices in the shouts of "Evoë!" which

rang out for the new Dionysus, who had again proved his claim to godship.

The late visitor found the grandparents alone in the house of Gorgias. They had been informed of Barine's new happiness long before. Now they rejoiced with Dion, and wanted to send at once for their host and future son-in-law, who was in the city attending a meeting of the Ephebi, although he had ceased some time ago to be a member of their company. But Dion wished to greet him among the youths who had invited the architect to give them his aid in deciding the question of the course they were to pursue in the impending battle.

Yet he did not leave the old couple immediately; he was expecting two visitors—Barine's mother and Charmian's Nubian maid who, since the birth of little Pyrrhus, had come to the philosopher's every evening. The former's errand was to ask whether any news of the mother and child had been received during the day; the latter, to get the letters which she delivered the next morning at the fish-market to her friend Pyrrhus or his sons.

Anukis was the first to appear. She relieved her sympathizing heart by a brief expression of congratulations; but, gladly as she would have listened to the most minute details concerning the beloved young mother from the lips of Dion himself, she repressed her own wishes for her mistress's sake, and returned to Charmian as quickly as pos-

sible to inform her of the arrival of the unexpected guest.

Berenike bore her new dignity of grandmother with grateful joy, yet to-night she came oppressed by a grave anxiety, which was not solely due to her power of imagining gloomy events. Her brother Arius and his sons were concealed in the house of a friend, for they seemed threatened by a serious peril. Hitherto Antony had generously borne the philosopher no ill-will on the score of his intimate relations with Octavianus; but now that Octavianus was encamped outside the city, the house of the man who, during the latter's years of education, had been his mentor and counsellor, and later a greatly valued friend, was watched, by Mardion's orders, by the Scythian guard. He and his family were forbidden to enter the city, and his escape to his friend had been effected under cover of the darkness and with great danger.

The anxious woman feared the worst for her brother if Mark Antony should conquer, and yet, with her whole heart, she wished the Queen to gain the victory. She, who always feared the worst, saw in imagination the fortunes of war change—and there was reason for the belief. The bold general who had gained so many victories, and whom the defeat of Actium had only humbled, was said to have regained his former elasticity. He had dashed forward at the head of his men with the heroic courage of former days—nay, with reckless

impetuosity. Rumour reported that, with the huge sword he wielded, he had dealt from his powerful charger blows as terrible as those inflicted five-and-twenty years before when, not far from the same spot, he struck Archelaus on the head. The statement that, in his golden armour, with the gold helmet framing his bearded face, he resembled his ancestor Herakles, was confirmed by Charmian, who had been borne quickly hither by a pair of the Queen's swift horses. Cleopatra might need her soon, yet she had left the Lochias to question the father about many things concerning the young mother and her boy, who was already dear to her as the first grandson of the man whose suit, it is true, she had rejected, but to whom she owed the delicious consciousness of having loved and been loved in the springtime of life.

Dion found her changed. The trying months which she had described in her letters to Barine had completely blanched her grey hair, her cheeks were sunken, and a deep line between her mouth and nose gave her pleasant face a sorrowful expression. Besides, she seemed to have been weeping and, in fact, heart-rending events had just occurred.

She had stolen away from Lochias in the midst of a revel.

Antony's victory was being celebrated. He himself presided at the banquet. Again his head and breast were wreathed with a wealth of fresh

leaves and superb flowers. At his side reclined Cleopatra, robed in light-blue garments adorned with lotus-flowers which, like the little coronet on her head, glittered with sapphires and pearls. Charmian said she had rarely looked more beautiful. But she did not add that the Queen had been obliged to have rouge applied to her pale, bloodless cheeks.

It was touching to see Antony after his return from the battle, still in his suit of mail, clasp her in his arms as joyously as if he had won her back, a prize of victory, and with his vanished heroic power regained her and their mutual love. Her eyes, too, had been radiant with joy and, in the elation of her heart, she had given the horseman who, for a deed of special daring, was presented to her, a helmet and coat of mail of solid gold.

Yet, even before the revel began, she had been forced to acknowledge to herself that the commencement of the end was approaching; for, a few hours after she had so generously rewarded the man, he had deserted to the foe. Then Antony had challenged Octavianus to a duel, and received the unfeeling reply that he would find many roads to death open.

This was the language of the cold-hearted foe, secure of superior power. How sadly, too, she had been disappointed in the hope that the veterans who had served under Antony would desert their

new commander at the first summons and flock to his standard!—for all her husband's efforts in this direction, spite of the bewitching power of his eloquence, failed, while every hour brought tidings of the treacherous desertion from his army of individual warriors and whole maniples. His foe deemed his cause so weak that he did not even resist Mark Antony's attempts to win the soldiers by promises.

From all these signs Cleopatra now saw plainly, in her lover's victory, only the last flicker of a dying fire; but so long as it burned he should see her follow its light.

Therefore she had entered the festal hall with the victor of the day. She had witnessed a strange festival. It began with tears and reminded Cleopatra of the saying that she herself resembled a banquet served to celebrate a victory before the battle was won. The cup-bearers had scarcely advanced to the guests with their golden vessels when Antony turned to them, exclaiming: "Pour generously, men; perhaps to-morrow you will serve another master!"

Then, unlike his usual self, he grew thoughtful and murmured under his breath, "And I shall probably be lying outside a corpse, a miserable nothing."

Loud sobs from the cup-bearers and servants followed these words; but he addressed them calmly, assuring them that he would not take them

into a battle from which he expected an honourable death rather than rescue and victory.

At this Cleopatra's tears flowed also. If this reckless man of pleasure, this notorious spendthrift and disturber of the public peace, with his insatiate desires, had inspired bitter hostility, few had gained the warm love of so many hearts. One glance at his heroic figure; one memory of the days when even his foes conceded that he was never greater than in the presence of the most imminent peril, never more capable of awakening in others the hope of brighter times than amid the sorest privations; one tone of the orator's deep, resonant voice, which so often came from the heart and therefore gained hearts with such resistless power; the recollection of numberless instances of the bright cheerfulness of his nature and his boundless generosity sufficiently explained the lamentations which burst forth at that banquet, the tears which flowed—tears of genuine feeling. They were also shed for the beautiful Queen who, unmindful of the spectators, rested her noble brow, with its coronal of pearls, upon his mighty shoulder.

But the grief did not last long, for Mark Antony, shouted: "Hence with melancholy! We do not need the larva!* We know, without its aid, that

* At the banquets of the Egyptians a small figure in the shape of a mummy was passed around to remind the guests that they, too, would soon be in the same condition, and have no more time to enjoy life and its pleasures. The Romans imi-

pleasure will soon be over!—Xuthus, a joyous festal song!—And you, Metrodor, lead the dancers! The first beaker to the fairest, the best, the wisest, the most cherished, the most fervently beloved of women!" As he spoke he waved his goblet aloft, the flute-player, Xuthus, beckoned to the chorus, and the dancer Metrodor, in the guise of a butterfly, led forth a bevy of beautiful girls, who, in the cloud of ample robes of transparent coloured bombyx which floated around them, executed the most graceful figures and now hovered like mists, now flitted to and fro as if borne on wings, affording the most charming variety to the delighted spectators.

The "Comrades of Death" had again become companions in pleasure; and when Charmian, who did not lose sight of her mistress, noticed the sorrowful quiver of her lips and glided out of the circle of guests, the faithful Nubian had approached to inform her of Dion's arrival.

Then—but this she concealed from her friends—she hastened to her own apartments to prepare to go out, and when Iras opened the door to enter her rooms she went to speak to her about the night attendance upon the Queen. But her niece had not perceived her; shaken by convulsive sobs, she

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tated this custom by sending the larva, a statuette in the form of a skeleton, to make the round of the revellers. The Greek love of beauty converted this ugly scarecrow into a winged genius.

had pressed her face among the cushions of a couch, and there suffered the fierce anguish which had stirred the inmost depths of her being to rave itself out with the full vehemence of her passionate nature. Charmian called her name and, weeping herself, opened her arms to her, and for the first time since her return from Actium her sister's daughter again sank upon her breast, and they held each other in a close embrace until Charmian's exclamation, "With her, for her unto death!" was answered by Iras's "To the tomb!"

This was a word which, in many an hour of the silent night, had stirred the soul of the woman who had been the youthful playmate of the Queen who, with bleeding heart, sat below among the revellers at the noisy banquet and forced her to ask the question: "Is not your fate bound to hers? What can life offer you without her?"

Now, this word was spoken by other lips, and, like an echo of Iras's exclamation, came the answer: "Unto death, like you, if she precedes us to the other world. Whatever may follow dying, nowhere shall she lack Charmian's hand and heart."

"Nor the love and service of Iras," was the answering assurance.

So they had parted, and the agitation of this fateful moment was still visible in the features of the woman who had formerly sacrificed to her royal playfellow her love, and now offered her life.

When, ere leaving Gorgias's house, she bade her friend farewell, she pressed Dion's hand with affectionate warmth and, as he accompanied her to the carriage, she informed him that, before the first encounter of the troops, Archibius had taken the royal children to his estate of Irenia, where they were at present.

"Rarely has it been my fate to experience a more sorrowful hour than when I beheld the Queen, her heart torn with anguish, bid them farewell. What fate is impending over the dear ones, who are so worthy of the greatest happiness? To see the twins and little Alexander recognized and saved from death and insult, and your boy in Barine's arms, is the last wish which I still cherish."

On returning to Lochias, Charmian had a long time to wait ere the Queen retired. She dreaded the mood in which she would leave the banquet. For months past Cleopatra had returned from the revels of the "Comrades of Death" saddened to tears, or in a blaze of indignation. How must this last banquet, which began so mournfully and continued with such reckless mirth, affect her?

At last, the second hour after midnight, Cleopatra appeared.

Charmian believed that she must be the sport of some delusion, for the Queen's eyes which, when she had left her, were full of tears, now

sparkled with the radiant light of joy and, as her friend took the crown from her head, she exclaimed:

"Why did you depart from the banquet so early? Perhaps it was the last, but I remember no festival more brilliant. It was like the spring-time of my love. Mark Antony would have touched the heart of a stone statue by that blending of manly daring and humble devotion which no woman can resist. As in former days, hours shrivelled into moments. We were again young, once more united. We were together here at Lochias to-night, and yet in distant years and other places. The notes of the singers, the melodies of the musicians, the figures executed by the dancers, were lost upon us. We soared back, hand in hand, to a magic world, and the fairy drama in the realms of the blessed, which passed before us in dazzling splendour and blissful joy, was the dream which I loved best when a child, and at the same time the happiest portion of the life of the Queen of Egypt.

"It began before the gate of the garden of Epicurus, and continued on the river Cydnus. I again beheld myself on the golden barge, garlanded with wreaths of flowers, reclining on the purple couch with roses strewn around me and beneath my jewelled sandals. A gentle breeze swelled the silken sails; my female companions raised their clear voices in song to the accompa-

niment of lutes; the perfumes floating around us were borne by the wind to the shore, conveying the tidings that the bliss believed by mortals to be reserved for the gods alone was drawing near. And even as his heart and his enraptured senses yielded to my sway, his mind, as he himself confessed, was under the thrall of mine. We both felt happy, united by ties which nothing, not even misfortune, could sever. He, the ruler of the world, was conquered, and delighted to obey the behests of the victor, because he felt that she before whom he bowed was his own obedient slave. And no magic goblet effected all this. I breathed more freely, as if relieved from the oppressive delusion—the fire had consumed it also—which had burdened my soul until a few hours ago. No magic spell, only the gifts of mind and soul which the vanquished victor, the woman Cleopatra, owed to the favour of the immortals, had compelled his lofty manhood to yield.

"From the Cydnus he brought me hither to the blissful days which we were permitted to pass in my city of Alexandria. A thousand sunny hours, musical, echoing surges which long since dashed down the stream of Time, he recalled to life, and I —I did the same, and our memories blended into one. What never-to-be-forgotten moments we experienced when, with reckless mirth, we mingled unrecognized among the joyous throng! What Olympic delight elated our hearts when the plaud-

its of thousands greeted us! What joys satiated our minds and senses in our own apartments! What pure, unalloyed nectar of the soul was bestowed upon us by our children—bliss which we shared with and imparted to each other until neither knew which was the giver and which the receiver! Everything sad and painful seemed to be effaced from the book of memory; and the child's dream, the fairy-tale woven by the power of imagination, stood before my soul as a reality—the same reality, I repeat, which I call my past life.

"And, Charmian, if death comes to-morrow, should I say that he appeared too early—summoned me ere he permitted life to bestow all its best gifts upon me? No, no, and again no! Whoever, in the last hour of existence, can say that the fairest dreams of childhood were surpassed by a long portion of actual life, may consider himself happy, even in the deepest need and on the verge of the grave.

"The aspiration to be first and highest among the women of her own time, which had already thrilled the young girl's heart, was fulfilled. The ardent longing for love which, even at that period, pervaded my whole being, was satisfied when I became a loving wife, mother, and Queen, and friendship, through the favour of Destiny, also bestowed upon me its greatest blessings by the hands of Archibius, Charmian, and Iras.

"Now I care not what may happen. This evening taught me that life had fulfilled its pledges. But others, too, must be enabled to remember the most brilliant of queens, who was also the most fervently beloved of women. For this I will provide: the mausoleum which Gorgias is erecting for me will stand like an indestructible wall between the Cleopatra who to-day still proudly wears the crown and her approaching humiliation and disgrace.

"Now I will go to sleep. If my awakening brings defeat, sorrow, and death, I have no reason to accuse my fate. It denied me one thing only: the painless peace which the child and the young girl recognized as the chief good; yet Cleopatra will possess that also. The domain of death, which, as the Egyptians say, loves silence, is opening its doors to me. The most absolute peace begins upon its threshold—who knows where it ends? The vision of the intellect does not extend far enough to discover the boundary where, at the end of eternity—which in truth is endless—it is replaced by something else."

While speaking, the Queen had motioned to her friend to accompany her into her chamber, from which a door led into the children's room. An irresistible impulse constrained her to open it and gaze into the dark, empty apartment.

She felt an icy chill run through her veins. Taking a light from the hand of one of the maids who

attended her, she went to little Alexander's couch. Like the others, it was empty, deserted. Her head sank on her breast, the courageous calmness with which she had surveyed her whole past life failed and, like the luxuriant riot in the sky of the most brilliant hues, ere the glow of sunset suddenly yields to darkness, Cleopatra's soul, after the lofty elation of the last few hours, underwent a sudden transition and, overwhelmed by deep, sorrowful depression, she threw herself down before the twins' bed, where she lay weeping softly until Charmian, as day began to dawn, urged her to retire to rest. Cleopatra slowly rose, dried her eyes, and said: "My past life seemed to me just now like a magnificent garden, but how many serpents suddenly stretched out their flat heads with glittering eyes and forked tongues! Who tore away the flowers beneath which they lay concealed? I think, Charmian, it was a mysterious power which here, in the children's apartment, rules so strongly the most trivial as well as the strongest emotions, it was—when did I last hear that ominous word?—it was conscience. Here, in this abode of innocence and purity, whatever resembles a spot stands forth distinctly before the eyes. Here, O Charmian!—if the children were but here! If I could only—yet, no, no! It is fortunate, very fortunate that they have gone. I must be strong; and their sweet grace would rob me of my energy. But the light grows brighter and brighter. Dress me for

the day. It would be easier for me to sleep in a falling house than with such a tumult in my heart."

While she was being attired in the dark robes she had ordered, loud shouts arose from the royal harbour below, blended with the blasts of the tuba and other signals directing the movements of the fleet and the army, a large body of troops having been marched during the night to the neighbouring hills overlooking the sea.

The notes sounded bold and warlike. The well-armed galleys presented a stately appearance. How often Cleopatra had seen unexpected events occur, apparent impossibilities become possible! Had not the victory of Octavianus at Actium been a miracle? What if Fate, like a capricious ruler, now changed from frowns to smiles? What if Antony proved himself the hero of yesterday, the general he had been in days of yore?

She had refused to see him again before the battle, that she might not divert his thoughts from the great task approaching. But now, as she beheld him, clad in glittering armour like the god of war himself, ride before the troops on his fiery Barbary charger, greeting them with the gay salutation whose warmth sprung from the heart and which had so often kindled the warriors to glowing enthusiasm, she was forced to do violence to her own feelings to avoid calling him and saying that her thoughts would follow his course. But she

refrained, and when his purple cloak vanished from her sight her head drooped again. How different in former days were the cheers of the troops when he showed himself to them! This lukewarm response to his gay, glad greeting was no omen of victory.

CHAPTER XXII.

Dion, too, witnessed the departure of the troops. Gorgias, whom he had found among the Ephebi, accompanied him and, like the Queen, they saw, in the cautious manner with which the army greeted the general, a bad omen for the result of the battle. The architect had presented Dion to the youths as the ghost of a dead man, who, as soon as he was asked whence he came or whither he was going, would be compelled to vanish in the form of a fly. He could venture to do this; he knew the Ephebi—there was no traitor in their ranks.

Dion, the former head of the society, had been welcomed like a beloved brother risen from the dead, and he had the gratification, after so long a time, of turning the scale as speaker in a debate. True, he had encountered very little opposition, for the resolve to hold aloof from the battle against the Romans had been urged upon the Ephebi by the Queen herself through Antyllus, who, however, had already left the meeting when Dion joined it. It had seemed to Cleopatra a crime to

claim the blood of the noblest sons of the city for a cause which she herself deemed lost. She knew the parents of many, and feared that Octavianus would inflict a terrible punishment upon them if, not being enrolled in the army, they fell into his power with arms in their hands.

The stars were already setting when the Ephebi accompanied their friend, singing in chorus the Hymenæus, which they had been unable to chant on his wedding day. The melody of lutes accompanied the voices, and this nocturnal music was the source of the rumour that the god Dionysus, to whom Mark Antony felt specially akin, and in whose form he had so often appeared to the people, had abandoned him amid songs and music.

The youths left Dion in front of the Temple of Isis. Gorgias alone remained with him. The architect led his friend to the Queen's mausoleum near the sanctuary, where men were toiling busily by torchlight. A light scaffolding still surrounded it, but the lofty first story, containing the real tomb, was completed, and Dion admired the art with which the exterior of the edifice suggested its purpose. Huge blocks of dark-grey granite formed the walls. The broad front—solemn, almost gloomy in aspect—rose, sloping slightly, above the massive lofty door, surmounted by a moulding bearing the winged disk of the sun. On either side were niches containing statues of Antony and

Cleopatra cast in dark bronze, and above the cornice were brazen figures of Love and Death, Fame and Silence, ennobling the Egyptian forms with exquisite works of Hellenic art.

The massive door, adorned with brass figures in relief, would have resisted a battering-ram. On the side of the steps leading to it lay Sphinxes of dark-green diorite. Everything connected with this building, dedicated to death, was grave and massive, suggesting by its indestructibility the idea of eternity.

The second story was not yet finished; masons and stone-cutters were engaged in covering the strong walls with dark serpentine and black marble. The huge windlass stood ready to raise a masterpiece of Alexandrian art. This was intended for the pediment, and represented Venus Victrix with helmet, shield, and lance, leading a band of winged gods of love, little archers at whose head Eros himself was discharging arrows, and victoriously fighting against the three-headed Cerberus, death, already bleeding from many wounds.

There was no time to see the interior of the building, for Pyrrhus expected his guest to join him at the harbour at sunrise, and the eastern sky was already brightening with the approach of dawn.

As the friends reached the landing-place the brass dome of the Serapeum, which towered above everything, was glittering with dazzling splendour.

The pennons and masts of the fleet which was about to set sail from the harbour seemed steeped in a sea of golden light. Tremulous reflections of the brazen and gilded figures on the prows of the vessels were mirrored in the undulating surface of the sea, and the long shadows of the banks of oars united galley after galley on the surface of the water like the meshes of a net.

Here the friends parted, and Dion walked down the quay alone to meet the freedman, who must have found it difficult to guide his boat out of this labyrinth of vessels. The inspection of the mausoleum had detained the young father too long and, though disguised beyond recognition, he reproached himself for having recklessly incurred a danger whose consequences—he felt this to-day for the first time—would not injure himself alone. The whole fleet was awaiting the signal for departure. The vessels which did not belong to it had been obliged to moor in front of the Temple of Poseidon, and all were strictly forbidden to leave the anchorage.

Pyrrhus's fishing-boat was in the midst, and return to the Serpent Island was impossible at present.

How vexatious! Barine was ignorant of his trip to the city, and to be compelled to leave her alone while a naval battle was in progress directly before her eyes distressed him as much as it could not fail to alarm her.

In fact, the young mother had waited from early dawn with increasing anxiety for her husband. As the sun rose higher, and the strokes of the oars propelling two hundred galleys, the shrill whistle of the flutes marking the time, the deep voices of the captains shouting orders, and the blasts of the trumpets filling the air, were heard far and near around the island, she became so overwhelmed with uneasiness that she insisted upon going to the shore, though hitherto she had not been permitted to take the air except under the awning stretched for the purpose on the shady side of the house.

In vain the women urged her not to let her fears gain the mastery and to have patience. But she would have resisted even force in order to look for him who, with her child, now comprised her world.

When, leaning on Helena's arm, she reached the shore, no boat was in sight. The sea was covered with ships of war, floating fortresses, moving onward like dragons with a thousand legs whose feet were the countless rowers arranged in three or five sets. Each of the larger galleys was surrounded by smaller ones, from most of which darted dazzling flashes of light, for they were crowded with armed men, and from the prows of the strong boarding vessels the sunbeams glittered on the large shining metal points whose office was to pierce the wooden sides of the foe. The gilded

statues in the prows of the large galleys shone and sparkled in the broad radiance of the day-star, and flashes of light also came from the low hills on the shore. Here Mark Antony's soldiers were stationed, and the sunbeams reflected from the helmets, coats of mail, and lance-heads of the infantry, and the armour of the horsemen quivered with dazzling brilliancy in the hot air of the first day of an Egyptian August.

Amid this blazing, flashing, and sparkling in the morning air, so steeped in warmth and radiance, the sounds of warlike preparations from the land and fleet constantly grew louder. Barine, exhausted, had just sunk into a chair which Dione, the fisherman's daughter, had placed in the shade of the highest rock on the northwestern shore of the flat island, when a crashing blast of the tuba suddenly echoed from all the galleys in the Egyptian fleet, and the whole array of vessels filed past the Pharos at the opening of the harbour into the open sea.

There the narrow ranks of the wooden giants separated and moved onward in broader lines. This was done quietly and in the same faultless order as a few days before, when a similar manœuvre had been executed under the eyes of Mark Antony.

The longing for combat seemed to urge them steadily forward.

The hostile fleet, lying motionless, awaited the

attack. But the Egyptian assailants had advanced majestically only a few ships' lengths towards the Roman foe when another signal rent the air. The women whose ears caught the waves of sound said afterwards that it seemed like a cry of agony—it had given the signal for a deed of unequalled treachery. The slaves, criminals, and the basest of the mercenaries on the rowers' benches in the hold had doubtless long listened intently for it, and, when it finally came, the men on the upper benches raised their long oars and held them aloft, which stopped the work of those below, and every galley paused, pointing at the next with the wooden oars outstretched like fingers, as if seized with horror. The celerity and faultless order with which the raising of the oars was executed and vessel after vessel brought to a stand would have been a credit to an honourable captain, but the manœuvre introduced one of the basest acts ever recorded in history; and the women, who had witnessed many a *naumachia* and understood its meaning, exclaimed as if with a single voice: "Treachery! They are going over to the enemy!"

Mark Antony's fleet, created for him by Cleopatra, surrendered, down to the last galley, to Cæsar's heir, the victor of Actium; and the man to whom the sailors had vowed allegiance, who had drilled them, and only yesterday had urged them to offer a gallant resistance, saw from one of the

downs on the shore the strong weapons on which he had based the fairest hopes, not shattered, but delivered into the hands of the enemy!

The surrender of the fleet to the foe—he knew it—sealed his destruction; and the women on the shore of the Serpent Island, who were so closely connected with those on whom this misfortune fell, suspected the same thing. The hearts of both were stirred, and their eyes grew dim with tears of indignation and sorrow. They were Alexandrians, and did not desire to be ruled by Rome.

Cleopatra, daughter of the Macedonian house of the Ptolemies, had the sole right to govern the city of her ancestors, founded by the great Macedonian. The sorrow they had themselves endured through her sank into insignificance beside the tremendous blow of Fate which in this hour reached the Queen.

The Roman and Egyptian fleet returned to the harbour as one vast squadron under the same commander, and anchored in the roadstead of the city, which was now its precious booty.

Barine had seen enough, and returned to the house with drooping head. Her heart was heavy, and her anxiety for the man she loved hourly increased.

It seemed as if the very day-star shrank from illuminating so infamous a deed with friendly light; for the dazzling, searching sun of the first of August veiled its radiant face with a greyish-

white mist, and the desecrated sea wrinkled its brow, changed its pure azure robe to yellowish grey and blackish green, while the white foam hissed on the crests of the angry waves.

As twilight began to approach, the anxiety of the deserted wife became unendurable. Not only Helena's wise words of caution, but the sight of her child, failed to exert their usual influence; and Barine had already summoned the son of Pyrrhus to persuade him to take her in his boat to the city, when Dione saw a boat approaching the Serpent Island from the direction of the sea.

A short time after, Dion sprang on shore and kissed from his young wife's lips the reproaches with which she greeted him.

He had heard of the treachery of the fleet while entering a hired boat with the freedman in the harbour of Eunostus, Pyrrhus's having been detained with the other craft before the Temple of Poseidon.

The experienced pilot had been obliged to steer the boat in a wider curve against the wind through the open sea, and was delayed a long time by a number of the war vessels of the fleet.

Danger and separation were now passed, and they rejoiced in the happiness of meeting, yet could not feel genuine joy. Their souls were oppressed by anxiety concerning the fate of the Queen and their native city.

As night closed in the dogs barked violently,

and they heard loud voices on the shore. Dion, with a presentiment that misfortune was threatening himself and his dear ones, obeyed the summons.

No star illumined the darkness. Only the wavering light of a lantern on the strand and another on the nearest island illumined the immediate vicinity, while southward the lights in the city shone as brightly as ever.

Pyrrhus and his youngest son were just pushing a boat into the water to release from the sands another which had run aground in a shallow near the neighbouring island.

Dion sprang in with them, and soon recognized in the hail the voice of the architect Gorgias.

The young father shouted a joyous greeting to his friend, but there was no reply.

Soon after, Pyrrhus landed his belated guest on the shore. He had escaped—as the fisherman explained—a great danger; for had he gone to the other island, which swarmed with venomous serpents, he might easily have fallen a victim to the bite of one of the reptiles.

Gorgias grasped Dion's hand but, in reply to his gay invitation to accompany him to the house at once, he begged him to listen to his story before joining the ladies.

Dion was startled. He knew his friend. When his deep voice had such a tone of gloomy discour-

agement, and his head drooped so mournfully, some terrible event had befallen him.

His foreboding had been correct. The first tidings pierced his own soul deeply.

He was not surprised to learn that the Romans ruled Alexandria; but a small band of the conquerors, who had been ordered to conduct themselves as if they were in a friendly country, had forced their way into the architect's large house to occupy the quarters assigned to them. The deaf grandmother of Helena and Barine, who had but half comprehended what threatened the citizens, terrified by the noisy entrance of the soldiers, had had another attack of apoplexy, and closed her eyes in death before Gorgias set out for the island.

But it was not only this sad event, which must grieve the hearts of the two sisters, that had brought the architect in a stranger's boat to the Serpent Island at so late an hour. His soul was so agitated by the horrible incidents of the day that he needed to seek consolation among those from whom he was sure to find sympathy.

Nor was it wholly the terrible things Fate had compelled him to witness which induced him to venture out upon the sea so recklessly, but still more the desire to bring to the fugitives the happy news that they might return with safety to their native city.

Deeply agitated—nay, confused and overpow-

ered by all he had seen and experienced—the architect, usually so clear and, with all his mental vivacity, so circumspect, began his story. A remonstrance from Dion induced him to collect his thoughts and describe events in the order in which they had befallen him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

After accompanying Dion to the harbour, the architect had gone to the Forum to converse with the men he met there, and learn what they feared and expected in regard to the future fate of the city.

All news reached this meeting-place first, and he found a large number of Macedonian citizens who, like himself, wished to discuss passing events in these decisive hours.

The scene was very animated, for the most contradictory messages were constantly arriving from the fleet and the army.

At first they were very favourable; then came the news of the treason, and soon after of the desertion of the cavalry and foot soldiers.

A distinguished citizen had seen Mark Antony, accompanied by several friends, dashing down the quay. The goal of their flight was the little palace on the Choma.

Grave men, whose opinion met with little opposition, thought that it was the duty of the Imperator—now that Fate had decided against him,

and nothing remained save a life sullied by disgrace—to put himself to death with his own hand, like Brutus and so many other noble Romans. Tidings soon came that he had attempted to do what the best citizens expected.

Gorgias could not endure to remain longer in the Forum, but hastened to the Choma, though it was difficult to force his way to the wall, where a breach had been made. He had found the portion of the shore from which the promontory ran densely crowded with people—from whom he learned that Antony was no longer in the palace—and the sea filled with boats.

A corpse was just being borne out of the little palace on the Street of the King and, among those who followed, Gorgias recognized one of Antony's slaves. The man's eyes were red with weeping. He readily obeyed the architect's sign and, sobbing bitterly, told him that the hapless general, after his army had betrayed him, fled hither. When he heard in the palace that Cleopatra had preceded him to Hades, he ordered his body-slave Eros to put an end to his life also. The worthy man drew back, pierced his own breast with his sword, and sank dying at his master's feet; but Antony, exclaiming that Eros's example had taught him his duty, thrust the short sword into his breast with his own hand. Yet deep and severe as was the wound, it did not destroy the tremendous vitality of the gigantic Roman. With touching

entreaties he implored the bystanders to kill him, but no one could bring himself to commit the deed. Meanwhile Cleopatra's name, coupled with the wish to follow her, was constantly on the lips of the Imperator.

At last Diomedes, the Queen's private secretary, appeared, to bring him, by her orders, to the mausoleum where she had taken refuge.

Antony, as if animated with fresh vigour, assented, and while being carried thither gave orders that Eros should have a worthy burial. Even though dying, it would have been impossible for the most generous of masters to permit any kindness rendered to pass unrequited.

The slave again wept aloud as he uttered the words, but Gorgias hastened at once to the tomb.

The nearest way, the Street of the King, had become so crowded with people who had been forced back by Roman soldiers, between the Theatre of Dionysus and the Corner of the Muses, that he had been compelled to reach the building through a side street.

The quay was already unrecognizable, and even in the other streets the populace showed a foreign aspect. Instead of peaceful citizens, Roman soldiers in full armour were met everywhere. Instead of Greek, Egyptian, and Syrian faces, fair and dark visages of alien appearance were seen.

The city seemed transformed into a camp. Here he met a cohort of fair-haired Germans;

yonder another with locks of red whose home he did not know; and again a *vexil* of Numidian or Pannonian horsemen.

At the Temple of the Dioscuri he was stopped. A Hispanian maniple had just seized Antony's son Antyllus and, after a hasty court-martial, killed him. His tutor, Theodotus, had betrayed him to the Romans, but the infamous fellow was being led with bound hands after the corpse of the hapless youth, because he was caught in the act of hiding in his girdle a costly jewel which he had taken from his neck. Before his departure for the island Gorgias heard that the scoundrel had been sentenced to crucifixion.

At last he succeeded in forcing a passage to the tomb, which he found surrounded on all sides by Roman lictors and the Scythian guards of the city, who, however, permitted him, as the architect, to pass.

The numerous obstacles by which he had been delayed spared him from becoming an eye-witness of the most terrible scenes of the tragedy which had just ended; but he received a minute description from the Queen's private secretary, a well-disposed Macedonian, who had accompanied the wounded Antony, and with whom Gorgias had become intimately acquainted during the building of the mausoleum.

Cleopatra had fled to the tomb as soon as the fortune of war turned in favour of Octavianus. No

one was permitted to accompany her except Charmian and Iras, who had helped her close the heavy brazen door of the massive building. The false report of her death, which had induced Antony to put an end to his life, had perhaps arisen from the fact that the Queen was literally in the tomb.

When, borne in the arms of his faithful servants, he reached the mausoleum, mortally wounded, the Queen and her attendants vainly endeavoured to open the heavy brazen portal. But Cleopatra ardently longed to see her dying lover. She wished to have him near to render the last services, assure him once more of her devotion, close his eyes, and, if it was so ordered, die with him.

So she and her attendants had searched the place, and when Iras spoke of the windlass which stood on the scaffold to raise the heavy brass plate bearing the bas-relief of Love conquering Death, the Queen and her friends hastened up the stairs, the bearer below fastened the wounded man to the rope, and Cleopatra herself stood at the windlass to raise him, aided by her faithful companions.

Diomedes averred that he had never beheld a more piteous spectacle than the gigantic man hovering between heaven and earth in the agonies of death and, while suffering the most terrible torture, extending his arms longingly towards the woman he loved. Though scarcely able to speak, he tenderly called her name, but she made no reply; like Iras

and Charmian, she was exerting her whole strength at the windlass in the most passionate effort to raise him. The rope running over the pulley cut her tender hands; her beautiful face was terribly distorted; but she did not pause until they had succeeded in lifting the burden of the dying man higher and higher till he reached the floor of the scaffolding. The frantic exertion by which the three women had succeeded in accomplishing an act far beyond their strength, though it was doubled by the power of the most earnest will and ardent longing, would nevertheless have failed in attaining its object had not Diomedes, at the last moment, come to their assistance. He was a strong man, and by his aid the dying Roman was seized, drawn upon the scaffolding, and carried down the staircase to the tomb in the first story.

When the wounded general had been laid on one of the couches with which the great hall was already furnished, the private secretary retired, but remained on the staircase, an unnoticed spectator, in order to be at hand in case the Queen again needed his assistance. Flushed from the terrible exertion which she had just made, with tangled, dishevelled locks, gasping and moaning, Cleopatra, as if out of her senses, tore open her robe, beat her breast, and lacerated it with her nails. Then, pressing her own beautiful face on her lover's wound to stanch the flowing blood, she lavished upon him all the endearing names which she had

bestowed on the dying man in the springtime of their love.

His terrible suffering made her forget her own and the sad fate impending. Tears of pity fell like the refreshing drops of a shower upon the still unwithered blossoms of their love, and brought those which, during the preceding night, had revived anew, to their last magnificent unfolding.

Boundless, limitless as her former passion for this man, was now the grief with which his agonizing death filled her heart.

All that Mark Antony had been to her in the heyday of life, all their mutual experiences, all that each had received from the other, had returned to her memory in clear and vivid hues during the banquet which had closed a few hours ago. Now these scenes, condensed into a narrow compass, again passed before her mental vision, but only to reveal more distinctly the depth of misery of this hour. At last anguish forced even the clearest memories into oblivion: she saw nothing save the tortures of her lover; her brain, still active, revealed solely the gulf at her feet, and the tomb which yawned not only for Antony, but for herself.

Unable to think of the happiness enjoyed in the past or to hope for it in the future, she gave herself up to uncontrolled despair, and no woman of the people could have yielded more absolutely to the consuming grief which rent her heart, or ex-

pressed it in wilder, more frantic language, than did this great Queen, this woman who as a child had been so sensitive to the slightest suffering, and whose after-life had certainly not taught her to bear sorrow with patience. After Charmian, at the dying man's request, had given him some wine, he found strength to speak coherently, instead of moaning and sighing.

He tenderly urged Cleopatra to secure her own safety, if it could be done without dishonour, and mentioned Proculejus as the man most worthy of her confidence among the friends of Octavianus. Then he entreated her not to mourn for him, but to consider him happy; for he had enjoyed the richest favours of Fortune. He owed his brightest hours to her love; but he had also been the first and most powerful man on earth. Now he was dying in the arms of Love, honourable as a Roman who succumbed to Romans.

In this conviction he died after a short struggle.

Cleopatra had watched his last breath, closed his eyes, and then thrown herself tearlessly on her lover's body. At last she fainted, and lay unconscious with her head upon his marble breast.

The private secretary had witnessed all this, and then returned with tearful eyes to the second story. There he met Gorgias, who had climbed the scaffolding, and told him what he had seen and heard from the stairs. But his story was scarcely

ended when a carriage stopped at the Corner of the Muses and an aristocratic Roman alighted.

This was the very Proculejus whom the dying Antony had recommended to the woman he loved as worthy of her confidence.

"In fact," Gorgias continued, "he seemed in form and features one of the noblest of his haughty race. He came commissioned by Octavianus, and is said to be warmly devoted to the Cæsar, and a well-disposed man. We have also heard him mentioned as a poet and a brother-in-law of Mæcenas. A wealthy aristocrat, he is a generous patron of literature, and also holds art and science in high esteem. Timagenes lauds his culture and noble nature. Perhaps the historian was right; but where the object in question is the state and its advantage, what we here regard as worthy of a free man appears to be considered of little moment at the court of Octavianus. The lord to whom he gives his services intrusted him with a difficult task, and Proculejus doubtless considered it his duty to make every effort to perform it—and yet—— If I see aright, a day will come when he will curse this, and the obedience with which he, a free man, aided Cæsar—— But listen.

"Erect and haughty in his splendid suit of armour, he knocked at the door of the tomb. Cleopatra had regained consciousness and asked—she must have known him in Rome—what he desired.

"He had come, he answered courteously, by the command of Octavianus, to negotiate with her, and the Queen expressed her willingness to listen, but refused to admit him into the mausoleum.

"So they talked with each other through the door. With dignified composure, she asked to have the sons whom she had given to Antony—not Cæsarion—acknowledged as Kings of Egypt.

"Proculejus instantly promised to convey her wishes to Cæsar, and gave hopes of their fulfilment.

"While she was speaking of the children and their claims—she did not mention her own future—the Roman questioned her about Mark Antony's death, and then described the destruction of the dead man's army and other matters of trivial importance. Proculejus did not look like a babbler, but I felt a suspicion that he was intentionally trying to hold the attention of the Queen. This proved to be his design; he had been merely waiting for Cornelius Gallus, the commander of the fleet, of whom you have heard. He, too, ranks among the chief men in Rome, and yet he made himself the accomplice of Proculejus.

"The latter retired as soon as he had presented the new-comer to the hapless woman.

"I remained at my post and now heard Gallus assure Cleopatra of his master's sympathy. With the most bombastic exaggeration he described how bitterly Octavianus mourned in Mark Antony the

friend, the brother-in-law, the co-ruler and sharer in so many important enterprises. He had shed burning tears over the tidings of his death. Never had more sincere ones coursed down any man's cheeks.

"Gallus, too, seemed to me to be intentionally prolonging the conversation.

"Then, while I was listening intently to understand Cleopatra's brief replies, my foreman, who, when the workmen were driven away by the Romans, had concealed himself between two blocks of granite, came to me and said that Proculejus had just climbed a ladder to the scaffold in the rear of the monument. Two servants followed, and they had all stolen down into the hall.

"I hastily started up. I had been lying on the floor with my head outstretched to listen.

"Cost what it might, the Queen must be warned. Treachery was certainly at work here.

"But I came too late.

"O Dion! If I had only been informed a few minutes before, perhaps something still more terrible might have happened, but the Queen would have been spared what now threatens her. What can she expect from the conqueror who, in order to seize her alive, condescends to outwit a noble, defenceless woman, who has succumbed to superior power?

"Death would have released the unhappy Queen from sore trouble and horrible shame. And she

had already raised the dagger against her life. Before my eyes she flung aloft her beautiful arm with the flashing steel, which glittered in the light of the candles in the many-branched candelabra beside the sarcophagi. But I will try to remain calm! You shall hear what happened in regular order. My thoughts grow confused as the terrible scene recurs to my memory. To describe it as I saw it, I should need to be a poet, an artist in words; for what passed before me happened on a stage—you know, it was a tomb. The walls were of dark stone—dark, too, were the pillars and ceiling—all dark and glittering; most portions were smoothly polished stone, shining like a mirror. Near the sarcophagi, and around the candelabra as far as the vicinity of the door, where the rascally trick was played, the light was brilliant as in a festal hall. Every blood-stain on the hand, every scratch, every wound which the desperate woman had torn with her own nails on her bosom, which gleamed snow-white from her black robes, was distinctly visible. Farther away, on the right and left, the light was dim, and near the side walls the darkness was as intense as in a real tomb. On the smooth porphyry columns, the glittering black marble and serpentine—here, there, and everywhere—flickered the wavering reflection of the candlelight. The draught kept it continually in motion, and it wavered to and fro in the hall, like the restless souls of the damned. Wherever the eye turned

it met darkness. The end of the hall seemed black—black as the anteroom of Hades—yet through it pierced a brilliant moving bar; sunbeams which streamed from the stairway into the tomb and amid which danced tiny motes. How the scene impressed the eye! The home of gloomy Hecate! And the Queen and her impending fate! A picture flooded with light, standing forth in radiant relief against the darkness of the heavy, majestic forms surrounding it in a wide circle. This tomb in this light would be a palace meet for the gloomy rule of the king of the troop of demons conjured up by the power of a magician—if they have a ruler. But where am I wandering? 'The artist!' I hear you exclaim again, 'the artist! Instead of rushing forward and interposing, he stands studying the light and its effects in the royal tomb.' Yes, yes; I had come too late, too late—far too late! On the stairs leading to the lower story of the building I saw it, but I was not to blame for the delay—not in the least!

"At first I had been unable to see the men—or even a shadow; but I beheld plainly in the brightest glare of the light the body of Mark Antony on the couch and, in the dusk farther towards the right, Iras and Charmian trying to raise a trapdoor. It was the one which closed the passage leading to the combustible materials stored in the cellar. A sign from the Queen had commanded them to fire it. The first steps of the staircase,

down which I was hastening, were already behind me—then—then Proculejus, with two men, suddenly dashed from the intense darkness on the other side. Scarcely able to control myself, I sprang down the remaining steps, and while Iras's shrill cry, 'Poor Cleopatra, they will capture you!' still rang in my ears, I saw the betrayed Queen turn from the door through which, resolved on death, she was saying something to Gallus, perceive Proculejus close behind her, thrust her hand into her girdle, and with the speed of lightning—you have already heard so—throw up her arm with the little dagger to bury the sharp blade in her breast. What a picture! In the full radiance of the brilliant light, she resembled a statue of triumphant victory or of noble pride in great deeds accomplished; and then, then, only an instant later, what an outrage was inflicted!

"Like a robber, an assassin, Proculejus rushed upon her, seized her arm, and wrested the weapon from her grasp. His tall figure concealed her from me. But when, struggling to escape from the ruffian's clutch, she again turned her face towards the hall, what a transformation had occurred! Her eyes—you know how large they are—were twice their usual size, and blazed with scorn, fury, and hatred for the traitor. The cheering light had become a consuming fire. So I imagine the vengeance, the curse which calls down ruin upon the head of a foe. And Proculejus, the great lord, the poet

whose noble nature is praised by the authors on the banks of the Tiber, held the defenceless woman, the worthy daughter of a brilliant line of kings, in a firm grasp, as if it required the exertion of all his strength to master this delicate embodiment of charming womanhood. True, the proud blood of the outwitted lioness urged her to resist this profanation, and Proculejus—an enviable honour—made her feel the superior strength of his arm. I am no prophet, but Dion, I repeat, this shameful struggle and the glances which flashed upon him will be remembered to his dying hour. Had they been darted at me, I should have cursed my life. They blanched even the Roman's cheeks. He was lividly pale as he completed what he deemed his duty. His own aristocratic hands were degraded to the menial task of searching the garments of a woman, the Queen, for forbidden wares, poisons or weapons. He was aided by one of Cæsar's freedmen, Epaphroditus, who is said to stand so high in the favour of Octavianus.

"The scoundrel also searched Iras and Charmian, yet all the time both Romans constantly spoke in cajoling terms of Cæsar's favour, and his desire to grant Cleopatra everything which was due a Queen.

"At last she was taken back to Lochias, but I felt like a madman; for the image of the unfortunate woman pursued me like my shadow. It was no longer a vision of the bewitching sovereign—

nay, it resembled the incarnation of despair, tearless anguish, wrath demanding vengeance. I will not describe it; but those eyes, those flashing, threatening eyes, and the tangled hair on which Antony's blood had flowed—terrible, horrible! My heart grew chill, as if I had seen upon Athene's shield the head of the Medusa with its serpent locks.

"It had been impossible for me to warn her in time, or even to seize the traitor's arm—I have already said so—and yet, yet her shining image gazed reproachfully at me for my cowardly delay. Her glance still haunts me, robbing me of calmness and peace. Not until I gaze into Helena's pure, calm eyes will that terrible vision of the face, flooded by light in the midst of the tomb, cease to haunt me."

His friend laid his hand on his arm, spoke soothingly to him, and reminded him of the blessings which this terrible day—he had said so himself—had brought.

Dion was right to give this warning; for Gorgias's bearing and the very tone of his voice changed as he eagerly declared that the frightful events had been followed by more than happy ones for the city, his friend, and Barine.

Then, with a sigh of relief, he continued: "I pursued my way home like a drunken man. Every attempt to approach the Queen or her attendants was baffled, but I learned from Charmian's clever

Nubian that Cleopatra had been permitted, in Cæsar's name, to choose the palace she desired to occupy, and had selected the one at Lochias.

"I did not make much progress towards my house; the crowd in front of the great gymnasium stopped me. Octavianus had gone into the city, and the people, I heard, had greeted him with acclamations and flung themselves on their knees before him. Our stiff-necked Alexandrians in the dust before the victor! It enraged me, but my resentment was diminished.

"The members of the gymnasium all knew me. They made way and, ere I was aware of it, I had passed through the door. Tall Phryxus had drawn my arm through his. He appears and vanishes at will, is as alert as he is rich, sees and hears everything, and manages to secure the best places. This time he had again succeeded; for when he released me we were standing opposite to a newly erected tribune.

"They were waiting for Octavianus, who was still in the hypostyle of Euergetes receiving the homage of the epitrop, the members of the Council, the gymnasiarch, and I know not how many others.

"Phryxus said that on Cæsar's entry he had held out his hand to his former tutor, bade him accompany him, and commanded that his sons should be presented. The philosopher had been distinguished above every one else, and this will benefit you and yours; for he is Berenike's brother,

and therefore your wife's uncle. What he desires is sure to be granted. You will hear at once how studiously the Cæsar distinguishes him. I do not grudge it to the man; he interceded boldly for Barine; he is lauded as an able scholar, and he does not lack courage. In spite of Actium and the only disgraceful deed with which, to my knowledge, Mark Antony could be reproached—I mean the surrender of Turullius—Arius remained here, though the Imperator might have held the friend of Julius Cæsar's nephew as a hostage as easily as he gave up the Emperor's assassin.

"Since Octavianus encamped before the city, your uncle has been in serious danger, and his sons shared his peril. Surely you must know the handsome, vigorous young Ephebi.

"We were not obliged to wait long in the gymnasium ere the Cæsar appeared on the platform; and now—if your hand clenches, it is only what I expect—now all fell on their knees. Our turbulent, rebellious rabble raised their hands like pleading beggars, and grave, dignified men followed their example. Whoever saw me and Phryxus will number us among the kneeling lickspittles; for had we remained standing we should certainly have been dragged down. So we followed the example of the others."

"And Octavianus?" asked Dion eagerly.

"A man of regal bearing and youthful aspect; a beardless face of the finest chiselling, a profile

as beautiful as if created for the coin-maker; all the lines sharp and yet pleasing; every inch an aristocrat; but the very mirror of a cold nature, incapable of any lofty aspiration, any warm emotion, any tenderness of feeling. All in all, a handsome, haughty, calculating man, whose friendship would hardly benefit the heart, but from whose enmity may the immortals guard all we love!'

"Again he led Arius by the hand. The philosopher's sons followed the pair. When he stood on the stage, looking down upon the thousands kneeling before him, not a muscle of his noble face—it is certainly that—betrayed the slightest emotion. He gazed at us like a farmer surveying his flocks and, after a long silence, said curtly in excellent Greek that he absolved the Alexandrians from all guilt towards him: first—he counted as if he were summoning individual veterans to reward them—from respect for the illustrious founder of our city, Alexander, the conqueror of the world; secondly, because the greatness and beauty of Alexandria filled him with admiration; and, thirdly—he turned to Arius as he spoke—to give pleasure to his admirable and beloved friend.

"Then shouts of joy burst forth.

"Every one, from the humblest to the greatest, had had a heavy burden removed from his mind, and the throng had scarcely left the gymnasium when they were again laughing saucily enough, and there was no lack of biting and innocent jests.

The fat carpenter, Memnon—who furnished the wood-work for your palace—exclaimed close beside me that formerly a dolphin had saved Arius from the pirates; now Arius was saving marine Alexandria from the robbers. So the sport went on. Philostratus, Barine's first husband, offered the best butt for jests. The agitator had good reason to fear the worst; and now, clad in black mourning robes, ran after Arius, whom but a few months ago he persecuted with the most vindictive hatred, continually repeating this shallow bit of verse:

"'If he is a wise man, let the wise aid the wise.'

"Reaching home was not easy. The street was swarming with Roman soldiers. They fared well enough; for in the joy of their hearts many a prosperous citizen who saw his property saved invited individual warriors, or even a whole maniple, to the taverns or cook-shops, and the stock of wine in Alexandrian cellars will be considerably diminished to-night.

"Many, as I have already said, had been quartered in the houses, with orders to spare the property of the citizens; and it was in this way that the misfortune with which I commenced my narrative befell the grandmother. She died before my departure.

"All the gates of the city will now stand open to you, and the niece of Arius and her husband will be received with ovations. I don't grudge

Barine the good fortune; for the way in which your noble wife, who had cast her spell over me too, flung aside what is always dear to the admired city beauty and found on the loneliest of islands a new world in love, is worthy of all admiration and praise. For yourself, I dread new happiness and honours; if they are added to those which Fate bestowed upon you in such a wife and your son Pyrrhus, the gods would not be themselves if they did not pursue you with their envy. I have less reason to fear them."

"Ungrateful fellow!" interrupted his friend. "There will be numerous mortals to grudge you Helena. As for me, I have already felt many a slight foreboding; but we have already paid by no means a small tribute to the divine ones. The lamp is still burning in the sitting-room. Inform the sisters of their grandmother's death, and tell them the pleasant tidings you have brought us, but reserve until the morning a description of the terrible scenes you witnessed. We will not spoil their sleep. Mark my words! Helena's silent grief and her joy at our escape will lighten your heart."

And so it proved. True, Gorgias lived over again in his dreams the frightful spectacle witnessed the day before; but when the sun of the 2d day of August rose in full radiance over Alexandria and, early in the morning, boat after boat reached the Serpent Island, landing first Berenike

and her nephews, the sons of the honoured philosopher Arius, then clients, officials, and friends of Dion, and former favourite guests of Barine, to greet the young pair and escort them from the refuge which had so long sheltered them back to the city and their midst, new and pleasant impressions robbed the gloomy picture of a large portion of its terrors.

"Tall Phryxus" had rapidly spread the news of the place where Dion and Barine had vanished, and that they had long been happily wedded. Many deemed it well worth a short voyage to see the actors in so strange an adventure and be the first to greet them. Besides, those who knew Barine and her husband were curious to learn how two persons accustomed to the life of a great capital had endured for months such complete solitude. Many feared or expected to see them emaciated and careworn, haggard or sunk in melancholy, and hence there were a number of astonished faces among those whose boats the freedman Pyrrhus guided as pilot through the shallows which protected his island.

The return of this rare couple to their home would have afforded an excellent opportunity for gay festivities. Sincerely as the majority of the populace mourned the fate of the Queen, and gravely as the more thoughtful feared for Alexandria's freedom under Roman rule, all rejoiced over the lenient treatment of the city. Their lives and

property were safe, and the celebration of festivals had become a life habit with all classes. But the news of the death of Didymus's wife and the illness of the old man, who could not bear up under the loss of his faithful companion, gave Dion a right to refuse any gay welcome at his home.

Barine's sorrow was his also, and Didymus died a few days after his wife, with whom he had lived in the bonds of love for more than half a century —people said, "of a broken heart."

So Dion and his young wife entered his beautiful palace with no noisy festivities. Instead of the jubilant hymenæus, the voice of his own child greeted him on the threshold.

The mourning garments in which Barine welcomed him in the women's apartment reminded him of the envy of the gods which his friend had feared for him. But he often fancied that his mother's statue in the tablinum looked specially happy when the young mistress of the house entered it.

Barine, too, felt that her happiness as wife and mother in her magnificent home would have been overwhelming had not a wise destiny imposed upon her, just at this time, grief for those whom she loved.

Dion instantly devoted himself again to the affairs of the city and his own business. He and the woman he loved, who had first become really

his own during a time of sore privation, had run into the harbour and gazed quietly at the storms of life. The anchor of love, which moored their ship to the solid earth, had been tested in the solitude of the Serpent Island.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The fisherman and his family had watched the departure of their beloved guests with sorrowful hearts, and the women had shed many tears, although the sons of Pyrrhus had been dismissed from the fleet and were again helping their father at home, as in former times.

Besides, Dion had made the faithful freedman a prosperous man, and given his daughter, Dione, a marriage dowry. She was soon to become the wife of the captain of the Epicurus, Archibius's swift galley, whose acquaintance she had made when the vessel, on several occasions, brought Charmian's Nubian maid to the island. Anukis's object in making these visits was not only to see her friend, but to induce him to catch one of the poisonous serpents in the neighbouring island and keep it ready for the Queen.

Since Cleopatra had ascertained that no poison caused a less painful death than the fangs of the asp, she had resolved that the bite of one of these reptiles should release her from the burden of life. The clever Ethiopian had thought of inducing her

friend Pyrrhus to procure the adder, but it had required all Aisopion's skill in persuasion, and the touching manner in which she understood how to describe the Queen's terrible situation and severe suffering, to conquer the reluctance of the upright man. At last she succeeded in persuading him to measure a queen by a different standard from a woman of the people, and inducing him to arrange the manner and time of conveying the serpent into the well-guarded palace. A signal was to inform him when the decisive hour arrived. After that he was to be ready with the asp in the fish-market every day. Probably his service would soon be claimed; for Octavianus's delay was scarcely an indication of a favourable decision of Cleopatra's fate.

True, she was permitted to live in royal state at Lochias, and had even been allowed to have the children, the twins, and little Alexander sent back to her with the promise that life and liberty would be granted them; but Cæsarion—whose treacherous tutor Rhodon lured him from the journey southward back to Alexandria by all sorts of representations, among them the return of Barine—was held prisoner in his father's temple, where he had sought refuge. This news, and the fact that Octavianus had condemned to death the youth who bore so striking a resemblance to Cæsar, had not remained concealed from the unhappy mother. She was also informed of the words in which the

philosopher Arius had encouraged Cæsar's desire to rid himself of the son of his famous uncle. They referred to the Homeric saying concerning the disadvantage of having many rulers.

Everything which Cleopatra desired to know concerning events in the city reached her ears; for she was allowed much liberty—only she was closely watched day and night, and all the servants and officials to whom she granted an audience were carefully searched to keep from her all means of self-destruction.

True, it was very evident that she had closed her account with life. Her attempt to take no food and die of starvation must have been noticed. Threats directed against the children, through whom she could be most easily influenced, finally induced her to eat again. Octavianus was informed of all these things, and his conduct proved his anxiety to keep her from suicide.

Several Asiatic princes vied with each other in the desire to honour Mark Antony by a magnificent funeral, but Octavianus had allowed Cleopatra to provide the most superb obsequies. In the time of her deepest anguish it afforded her comfort and satisfaction to arrange everything herself, and even perform some offices with her own hands. The funeral had been as gorgeous as the dead man's love of splendour could have desired.

Iras and Charmian were often unable to understand how the Queen—who, since Antony's death,

had suffered not only from the wounds she had inflicted upon herself in her despair, but also after her baffled attempt at starvation from a slow fever—had succeeded in resisting the severe exertions and mental agitation to which she had been subjected by Antony's funeral.

The return of Archibius with the children, however, had visibly reanimated her flagging energy.

She often went to Didymus's garden, which was now connected with the palace at Lochias, to watch their work and share whatever interested their young hearts.

But the gayest of mothers, who had understood how to enter so thoroughly into her children's pursuits, had now become a sorrowful, grave monitor. Though the lessons she urged upon them were often beautiful and wise, they were little suited to the ages of Archibius's pupils, for they usually referred to death and to questions of philosophy not easily understood by children.

She herself felt that she no longer struck the right key; but whenever she tried to change it and jest with them as usual, she could endure the forced gaiety only a short time; a painful revulsion, frequently accompanied by tears, followed, and she was obliged to leave her darlings.

The life her foe granted her seemed like an intrusive gift, an oppressive debt, which we desire to pay a troublesome creditor as soon as possible.

She seemed calmer and apparently content only

when permitted to talk with the companions of her youth concerning bygone days, or with them and Iras of death, and how it would be possible to put an end to an unwelcome existence.

After such conversations Iras and Charmian left her with bleeding hearts. They had long since resolved to share the fate of their royal mistress, whatever it might be. Their common suffering was the bond which again united them in affection. Iras had provided poisoned pins which had speedily destroyed the animals upon which they had been tried. Cleopatra knew of their existence, but she herself preferred the painless death bestowed by the serpent's bite, and it was long since her friends had seen the eyes of their beloved sovereign sparkle so brightly as when Charmian told her that a way had been found to obtain the uræus serpent as soon as it was needed. But it was not yet imperative to adopt the last expedient. Octavianus wished to be considered lenient, and perhaps might still be prevailed upon to grant the Queen and her children a future meet for their royal birth.

Cleopatra's reply was an incredulous smile, yet a faint hope which saved her from despair began to bud in her soul.

Dolabella, an aristocratic Roman, a scion of the noble Cornelius family, was in the Cæsar's train, and had been presented to the Egyptian Queen. In former years his father was a friend of Cleopatra;

nay, she had placed him under obligations by sending him, after the murder of Julius Cæsar, the military force at her command to be used against Cassius. True, her legions, by messengers from Dolabella himself, were despatched in another direction; but Cleopatra had not withdrawn her favour from Dolabella's father on that account. The latter had known her in Rome before the death of Cæsar, and had enthusiastically described the charms of the bewitching Egyptian sovereign. Though the youth found her only a mourning widow, ill in body and mind, he was so strongly attracted and deeply moved by her beauty, her brilliant intellect, her grace of bearing, her misfortunes and sufferings, that he devoted many hours to her, and would have considered it a happiness to render her greater services than circumstances permitted. He often accompanied her to the children, whose hearts had been completely won by his frank, cheerful nature; and so it happened that he soon became one of the most welcome guests at Lochias. He confided without reserve every feeling that stirred his soul to the warm-hearted woman who was so many years his senior, and through him she learned many things connected with Octavianus and his surroundings. Without permitting himself to be used as a tool, he became an advocate for the unfortunate woman whom he so deeply esteemed.

In intercourse with her he made every effort to inspire confidence in Octavianus, who favoured

him, enjoyed his society, and in whose magnanimity the youth firmly believed.

He anticipated the best results from an interview between the Queen and the Cæsar; for he deemed it impossible that the successful conqueror could part untouched, and with no desire to mitigate her sad fate, from the woman who, in earlier years, had so fascinated his father, and whom he himself, though she might almost have been his mother, deemed peerless in her bewitching and gracious charm.

Cleopatra, on the contrary, shrank from meeting the man who had brought so much misfortune upon Mark Antony and herself, and inflicted upon her insults which were only too well calculated to make her doubt his clemency and truth. On the other hand, she could not deny Dolabella's assertion that it would be far less easy for Octavianus to refuse her in person the wishes she cherished for her children's future than through mediators. Proculejus had learned that Antony had named him to the Queen as the person most worthy of her confidence, and more keenly felt the wrong which, as the tool and obedient friend of Octavianus, he had inflicted upon the hapless woman. The memory of his unworthy deed, which history would chronicle, had robbed the sensitive man, the author and patron of budding Roman poetry, of many an hour's sleep, and therefore he also now laboured zealously to oblige the Queen and miti-

gate her hard fate. He, like the freedman Epaphroditus, who by Cæsar's orders watched carefully to prevent any attempt upon her life, seemed to base great hopes on such an interview, and endeavoured to persuade her to request an audience from the Cæsar.

Archibius said that, even in the worst case, it could not render the present state of affairs darker. Experience, he said to Charmian, proved that no man of any feeling could wholly resist the charm of her nature, and to him at least she had never seemed more winning than now. Who could have gazed unmoved into the beautiful face, so eloquent in its silent suffering, whose soul would not have been deeply touched by the sorrowful tones of her sweet voice? Besides, her sable mourning robes were so well suited to the slight tinge of melancholy which pervaded her whole aspect. When the fever flushed her cheeks, Archibius, spite of the ravages which grief, anxiety, and fear had made upon her charms, thought that he had never seen her look more beautiful. He knew her thoroughly, and was aware that her desire to follow the man she loved into the realm of death was sincere; nay, that it dominated her whole being. She clung to life only to die as soon as possible. The decision which, after her resolve to build the monument, she had recognized in the temple of Berenike as the right one, had become the rule of conduct of her life. Every thought, every conversation, led

her back to the past. The future seemed to exist no longer. If Archibius succeeded in directing her thoughts to approaching days she occupied herself wholly with her children's fate. For herself she expected nothing, felt absolved from every duty except the one of protecting herself and her name from dishonour and humiliation.

The fact that Octavianus, when he doomed Cæsarion to death, permitted the other children to return to her with the assurance that no harm should befall them, proved that he made a distinction between them and his uncle's son, and had no fears that they threatened his own safety. She might expect important results in their favour from an interview with Octavianus, so she at last authorized Proculejus to request an audience.

The Imperator's answer came the very same day. It was his place to seek her—so ran the Cæsar's message. This meeting must decide her fate. Cleopatra was aware of this, and begged Charmian to remember the asp.

Her attendants had been forbidden to leave Lochias, but Epaphroditus permitted them to receive visitors. The Nubian's merry, amusing talk had made friends for her among the Roman guards, who allowed her to pass in and out unmolested. On her return, of course, she was searched with the utmost care, like every one who entered Lochias.

The decisive hour was close at hand. Char-

mian knew what she must do in any event, but there was still one desire for whose fulfilment she longed. She wished to greet Barine and see her boy.

To spare Iras, she had hitherto refrained from sending for Dion's wife. The sight of the mother and child might have reopened wounds still unhealed, and she would not inflict this sorrow upon her niece, who for a long time had once more been loyally devoted to her.

Octavianus did not hasten to fulfil his assurance. But, at the end of a week, Proculejus brought the news that he could promise a visit from the Cæsar that afternoon. The Queen was deeply agitated, and desired before the interview to pay a visit to her tomb. Iras offered to accompany her, and as Cleopatra intended to remain an hour or longer, Charmian thought it a favourable opportunity to see Barine and her boy.

Dion's wife had been informed of her friend's wish, and Anukis, who was to take her to Lochias, did not wait long for the mother and child.

Didymus's garden—now the property of the royal children—was the scene of the meeting. In the shade of the familiar trees the young mother sank upon the breast of her faithful friend, and Charmian could not gaze her fill at the boy, or weary of tracing in his features a resemblance to his grandfather Leonax.

How much these two women, to whom Fate had

allotted lives so widely different, found to tell each other! The older felt transported to the past, the younger seemed to have naught save a present rich in blessing and a future green with hope. She had good news to tell of her sister also. Helena had long been the happy wife of Gorgias who, however, spite of the love with which he surrounded the young mistress of his house, numbered among his most blissful hours those which were devoted to overseeing the progress of the work on the mausoleum, where he met Cleopatra.

Time flew swiftly to the two women, and it was a painful surprise when one of the eunuchs on guard announced that the Queen had returned. Again Charmian embraced her lover's grandson, blessed him and the young mother, sent messages of remembrance to Dion, begged Barine to think of her affectionately when she had passed from earth and, if her heart prompted her to the act, to anoint or adorn with a ribbon or flower the tombstone of the woman who had no friend to render her such a service.

Deeply moved by the firmness with which Charmian witnessed the approach of death, Barine listened in silence, but suddenly started as the sharp tones of a well-known voice called her friend's name and, as she turned, Iras stood before her. Pallid and emaciated, she looked in her long, floating black robes the very incarnation of misery.

The sight pierced the heart of the happy wife and mother. She felt as if much of the joy which Iras lacked had fallen to her own lot, and all the grief and woe she had ever endured had been transferred to her foe. She would fain have approached humbly and said something very kind and friendly; but when she saw the tall, haggard woman gazing at her child, and noticed the disagreeable expression which had formerly induced her to compare her to a sharp thorn, a terrible dread of this woman's evil eye which might harm her boy seized the mother's heart and, overwhelmed by an impulse beyond control, she covered his face with her own veil.

Iras saw it, and after Barine had answered her question, "Dion's child?" in the affirmative, with a glance beseeching forbearance, the girl drew up her slender figure, saying with arrogant coldness: "What do I care for the child? We have more important matters on our hearts."

Then she turned to Charmian to inform her, in the tone of an official announcement, that during the approaching interview the Queen desired her attendance also.

Octavianus had appointed sunset for the interview, and it still lacked several hours of the time. The suffering Queen felt wearied by her visit to the mausoleum, where she had implored the spirit of Antony, if he had any power over the conqueror's heart, to induce him to release her from this tor-

turing uncertainty and promise the children a happy fate.

To Dolabella, who had accompanied her from the tomb to the palace, she said that she expected only one thing from this meeting, and then won from him a promise which strengthened her courage and seemed the most precious boon which could be granted at this time.

She had expressed the fear that Octavianus would still leave her in doubt. The youth spoke vehemently in Cæsar's defence, and closed with the exclamation, "If he should still keep you in suspense, he would be not only cool and circumspect——"

"Then," Cleopatra interrupted, "be nobler, be less cruel, and release your father's friend from these tortures. If he does not reveal to me what awaits me and you learn it, then—you will not say no, you cannot refuse me—then you, yes, you will inform me?"

Promptly and firmly came the reply: "What have I been able to do for you until now? But I will release you from *this* torture, if possible." Then he hastily turned his back, that he might not be compelled to see the eunuchs stationed at the palace gate search the garments of the royal captive.

His promise sustained the failing courage of the wearied, anxious Queen, and she reclined upon the cushions of a lounge to recover from the ex-

hausting expedition; but she had scarcely closed her eyes when the pavement of the court-yard rang under the hoofs of the four horses which bore the Cæsar to Lochias. Cleopatra had not expected the visit so early.

She had just been consulting with her attendants about the best mode of receiving him. At first she had been disposed to do so on the throne, clad in her royal attire, but she afterwards thought that she was too ill and weak to bear the heavy ornaments. Besides, the man and successful conqueror would show himself more indulgent and gracious to the suffering woman than to the princess.

There was much to palliate the course which she had pursued in former days, and she had carefully planned the defence by which she hoped to influence his calm but not unjust nature. Many things in her favour were contained in the letters from Cæsar and Antony which, after her husband's death, she had read again and again during so many wakeful nights, and they had just been brought to her.

Both Archibius and the Roman Proculejus had counselled her not to receive him entirely alone. The latter did not express his opinion in words, but he knew that Octavianus was more readily induced to noble and lenient deeds when there was no lack of witnesses to report them to the world. It was advisable to provide spectators for the most consummate actor of his day.

Therefore the Queen had retained Iras, Charmian, and some of the officials nearest to her person, among them the steward Seleukus, who could give information if any question arose concerning the delivery of the treasure.

She had also intended, after she had somewhat recovered from the visit to the tomb, to be robed in fresh garments. This was prevented by the Cæsar's unexpected arrival. Now, even had time permitted, she would have been unable to have her hair arranged, she felt so weak and yet so feverishly excited.

The blood coursed hotly through her veins and flushed her cheeks. When told that the Cæsar was close at hand, she had only time to raise herself a little higher on her cushions, push back her hair, and let Iras, with a few hasty touches, adjust the folds of her mourning robes. Had she attempted to advance to meet him, her limbs would have failed to support her.

When the Cæsar at last entered, she could greet him only by a wave of her hand; but Octavianus, who had uttered the usual salutations from the threshold, quickly broke the painful silence, saying with a courteous bow:

"You summoned me—I came. Every one is subject to beauty—even the victor."

Cleopatra's head drooped in shame as she answered distinctly, yet in a tone of modest denial:

"I only asked the favour of an audience. I did

not *summon.* I thank you for granting the request. If it is dangerous for man to bow to woman's charms, no peril threatens you here. Beauty cannot withstand tortures such as those which have been imposed on me—barely can life remain. But you prevented my casting it from me. If you are just, you will grant to the woman whom you would not permit to die an existence whose burden will not exceed her power to endure."

The Cæsar again bowed silently and answered courteously:

"I intend to make it worthy of you."

"Then," cried Cleopatra impetuously, "release me from this torturing uncertainty. You are not one of the men who never look beyond to-day and to-morrow."

"You are thinking," said Octavianus harshly, "of one who perhaps would still be among us, if with wiser caution——"

Cleopatra's eyes, which hitherto had met the victor's cold gaze with modest entreaty, flashed angrily, and a majestic: "Let the past rest!" interrupted him.

But she soon mastered the indignation which had stirred her passionate blood, and in a totally different tone, not wholly free from gentle persuasion, she continued:

"The provident intellect of the man whose nod the universe obeys grasps the future as well as the present. Must not he, therefore, have decided the

children's fate ere he consented to see their mother? The only obstacle in your path, the son of your great uncle——"

"His doom was a necessity," interrupted the conqueror in a tone of sincere regret. "As I mourned Antony, I grieve for the unfortunate boy."

"If that is true," replied Cleopatra eagerly, "it does honour to the kindness of your heart. When Proculejus wrested the dagger from my grasp he blamed me because I attributed to the most clement of conquerors harshness and implacability."

"Two qualities," the Cæsar protested, "which are wholly alien to my nature."

"And which—even if you possessed them—you neither could nor ought to use," cried Cleopatra, "if you really mean the beautiful words you so often utter that, as the nephew and heir of the great Julius Cæsar, you intend to walk in his footsteps. Cæsarion—there is his bust—was the image in every feature of his father, your illustrious model. To me, the hapless woman now awaiting my sentence from his nephew's lips, the gods granted, as the most precious of all gifts, the love of your divine uncle. And what love! The world knew not what I was to his great heart, but my wish to defend myself from misconception bids me show it to you, his heir. From you I expect my sentence. You are the judge. These letters are my strongest defence. I rely upon them to

show myself to you as I was and am, not as envy and slander describe me.—The little ivory casket, Iras! It contains the precious proofs of Cæsar's love, his letters to me."

She raised the lid with trembling hands and, as these mementoes carried her back to the past, she continued in lower tones:

"Among all my treasures this simple little coffer has been for half a lifetime my most valued jewel. He gave it to me. It was in the midst of the fierce contest here at the Bruchium."

Then, while unfolding the first roll, she directed Octavianus's attention to it and the remainder of the contents of the little casket, exclaiming:

"Silent pages, yet how eloquent! Each one a peerless picture, the powerful thinker, the man of action, who permits his restless intellect to repose, and suffers his heart to overflow with the love of youth! Were I vain, Octavianus, I might call each one of these letters a trophy of victory, an Olympic garland. The woman to whom Julius Cæsar owned his subjugation might well hold her head higher than the unhappy, vanquished Queen who, save the permission to die——"

"Do not part with the letters," said Octavianus kindly. "Who can doubt that they are a precious treasure——"

"The most precious and at the same time the advocate of the accused," replied Cleopatra eagerly; "on them—as you have already heard—rests my

vindication. I will commence with their contents. How terrible it is to make what is sacred to us and intended only to elevate our own hearts serve a purpose, to do what has always been repugnant to us! But I need an advocate and, Octavianus, these letters will restore to the wretched, suffering beggar the dignity and majesty of the Queen. The world knows but two powers to which Julius Cæsar bowed—the thrall of the pitiable woman on this couch, and of all-conquering death. An unpleasant fellowship—but I do not shrink from it; for death robbed him of life, and from my hand—— I ask only a brief moment. How gladly I would spare myself my own praises, and you the necessity of listening to them! Yes, here it is: 'Through you, you irresistible woman,' he writes, 'I learned for the first time, after youth was over, how beautiful life can be.'"

Cleopatra, as she spoke, handed Cæsar the letter. But while she was still searching hastily for another he returned the first, saying:

"I understand only too well your reluctance to allow such confidential effusions to play the part of defender. I can imagine their purport, and they shall influence me as if I had read them all. However eloquent they may be, they are needless witnesses. Is any written testimony required in behalf of charms whose magic is still potent?"

A bewitching smile, which seemed like a con-

firmation of the haughty young conqueror's flattering words, flitted over Cleopatra's face.

Octavianus noticed it. This woman indeed possessed enthralling charms, and he felt the slight flush that suffused his cheeks.

This unhappy captive, this suffering supplicant, could still draw into her net any man who did not possess the cool watchfulness which panoplied his soul. Was it the marvellous melody of her voice, the changeful lustre of her tearful eyes, the aristocratic grace of the noble figure, the exquisite symmetry of the hands and feet, the weakness of the prostrate sufferer, strangely blended with truly royal majesty, or the thought that love for her had bound earth's greatest and loftiest men with indissoluble fetters, which lent this fragile woman, who had long since passed the boundaries of youth, so powerful a spell of attraction ?

At any rate, however certain of himself he might be, he must guard his feelings. He understood how to bridle passion far better than the uncle who was so greatly his superior.

Yet it was of the utmost importance to keep her alive, and therefore to maintain her belief in his admiration. He wished to show the world and the Great Queen of the East, who had just boasted of conquering, like death, even the most mighty, his own supremacy as man and victor. But he must also be gentle, in order not to endanger the object for which he wanted her. She must accom-

pany him to Rome. She and her children promised to render his triumph the most brilliant and memorable one which any conqueror had ever displayed to the senate and the people. In a light tone which, however, revealed the emotion of his soul, he answered: "My illustrious uncle was known as a friend of fair women. His stern life was crowned with flowers by many hands, and he acknowledged these favours verbally and perhaps—as he did to you in all these letters—with the reed. His genius was greater, at any rate more many-sided and mobile, than mine. He succeeded, too, in pursuing different objects at the same time with equal devotion. I am wholly absorbed in the cares of state, of government, and war. I feel grateful when I can permit our poets to adorn my leisure for a brief space. Overburdened with toil, I have no time to yield myself captive, as my uncle did in these very rooms, to the most charming of women. If I could follow my own will, you would be the first from whom I would seek the gifts of Eros.—But it may not be! We Romans learn to curb even the most ardent wishes when duty and morality command. There is no city in the world where half so many gods are worshipped as here; and what strange deities are numbered among them! It needs a special effort of the intellect to understand them. But the simple duties of the domestic hearth!—they are too prosaic for you Alexandrians, who imbibe philosophy with your

mothers' milk. What marvel, if I looked for them in vain? True, they would find little satisfaction —our household gods I mean—here, where the rigid demands of Hymen are mute before the ardent pleadings of Eros. Marriage is scarcely reckoned among the sacred things of life. But this opinion seems to displease you."

"Because it is false," cried Cleopatra, repressing with difficulty a fresh outburst of indignation. "Yet, if I see aright, your reproach is aimed only at the bond which united me to the man who was called your sister's husband. But I will—— I would gladly remain silent, but you force me to speak, and I will do so, though your own friend, Proculejus, is signing to me to be cautious. I—I, Cleopatra, was the wife of Mark Antony according to the customs of this country, when you wedded him to the widow of Marcellus, who had scarcely closed his eyes. Not she, but I, was the deserted wife—I to whom his heart belonged until the hour of his death, not the unloved consort wedded——" Here her voice fell. She had yielded to the passionate impulse which urged her to express her feelings in the matter, and now continued in a tone of gentle explanation: "I know that you proposed this alliance solely for the peace and welfare of Rome——"

"To guard both, and to spare the blood of tens of thousands," Octavianus added with proud decision. "Your clear brain perceived the true state

of affairs. If, spite of the grave importance of these motives, you—— But what voices would not that of the heart silence with you women! The man, the Roman, succeeded in closing his ears to its siren song. Were it otherwise, I would never have chosen for my sister a husband by whom I knew her happiness would be so ill-guarded—I would, as I have already said, be unable to master my own admiration of the loveliest of women. But I ought scarcely to boast of that. I fear that a heart like yours opens less quickly to the modest Octavianus than to a Julius Cæsar or the brilliant Mark Antony. Yet I may be permitted to confess that perhaps I might have avoided conducting this unhappy war against my friend to the end under my own guidance, and appearing myself in Egypt, had I not been urged by the longing to see once more the woman who had dazzled my boyish eyes. Now, in my mature manhood, I desired to comprehend those marvellous gifts of mind, that matchless sagacity——"

"Sagacity!" interrupted the Queen, shrugging her shoulders mournfully. "You possess a far greater share of what is commonly called by that name. My fate proves it. The pliant intellect which the gods bestowed on me would ill sustain the test in this hour of anguish. But if you really care to learn what mental power Cleopatra once possessed, relieve me of this terrible burden of uncertainty, and grant me a position in life which

will permit my paralyzed soul to move freely once more."

"It depends solely on yourself," Octavianus eagerly responded, "to make your future life, not only free from care, but beautiful."

"On me?" asked Cleopatra in astonishment. "Our weal and woe are in your hands alone. I am modest and ask nothing save to know what you intend for our future, what you mean by the lot which you term beautiful."

"Nothing less," replied the Cæsar quietly, "than what seems to lie nearest to your own heart—a life of that freedom of soul to which you aspire."

The breath of the agitated Queen began to come more quickly and, no longer able to control the impatience which overpowered her, she exclaimed, "With the assurance of your favour on your lips, you refuse to discuss the question which interests, me beyond any other—for which, if any, you must have been prepared when you came here——"

"Reproaches?" asked Octavianus with well-feigned surprise. "Would it not rather be my place to complain? It is precisely because I am so thoroughly sincere in the friendly disposition which you read aright from my words, that some of your measures cannot fail to wound me. Your treasures were to be committed to the flames. It would be unfair to expect tokens of friendship

from the vanquished; but can you deny that even the bitterest hatred could scarcely succeed in devising anything more hostile?"

"Let the past rest! Who would not seek in war to diminish the enemy's booty?" pleaded the Queen in a soothing tone. But as Octavianus delayed his answer, she continued more eagerly: "It is said that the ibex in the mountains, when in mortal peril, rushes upon the hunter and hurls him with it down the precipice. The same impulse is natural to human beings, and praiseworthy, I think, in both. Forget the past, as I will try to do, I repeat with uplifted hands. Say that you will permit the sons whom I gave to Antony to ascend the Egyptian throne, not under their mother's guardianship, but that of Rome, and grant me freedom wherever I may live, and I will gladly transfer to you, down to the veriest trifles, all the property and treasures I possess."

She clenched her little hand impatiently under the folds of her robe as she spoke; but Octavianus lowered his eyes, saying carelessly: "In war the victor disposes of the property of the vanquished; but my heart restrains me from applying the universal law to you, who are so far above ordinary mortals. Your wealth is said to be vast, though the foolish war which Antony, with your aid, so greatly prolonged, devoured vast sums. In this country squandered gold seems like the grass which, when mowed, springs up anew."

"You speak," replied Cleopâtra, more and more deeply incensed, with proud composure, "of the treasures which my ancestors, the powerful monarchs of a wealthy country, amassed during three hundred years for their noble race and for the adornment of the women of their line. Parsimony did not accord with the generosity and lofty nature of an Antony, yet avarice itself would not deem the portion still remaining insignificant. Every article is registered."

While speaking, she took a manuscript from the hand of Seleukus and passed it to Octavianus who, with a slight bend of the head, received it in silence. But he had scarcely begun to read it when the steward, a little corpulent man with twinkling eyes half buried in his fat cheeks, raised his short forefinger, pointed insolently at the Queen, and asserted that she was trying to conceal some things, and had ordered him not to place them on the list. Every tinge of colour faded from the lips and cheeks of the agitated and passionate woman; tortured by feverish impatience and no longer able to control her emotions, she raised herself and, with her own dainty hand, struck the accuser—whom she had lifted from poverty and obscurity to his present high position—again and again in the face, till Octavianus, with a smile of superiority, begged her, much as the man deserved his punishment, to desist.

The unfortunate woman, thus thrown off her

guard, flung herself back on her couch and, panting for breath, with tears streaming from her eyes, sobbed aloud, declaring that in the presence of such unendurable insult, such contemptible baseness, she fairly loathed herself. Then pressing her clenched hands upon her temples, she exclaimed: "Before the eyes of the foe my royal dignity, which I have maintained all my life, falls from me like a borrowed mantle. Yet what am I? What shall I be to-morrow, what later? But who beneath the sun who has warm blood in his veins can preserve his composure when juicy grapes are held before his thirsting lips to be withdrawn, as from Tantalus, ere he can taste them? You came hither with the assurance of your favour; but the flattering words of promise which you bestowed upon the unhappy woman were probably only the drops of poppy-juice given to soothe the ravings of fever. Was the favour which you permitted me to see and anticipate for the future merely intended to delude a miserable——"

But she went no further; Octavianus, with dignified bearing and loud, clear tones, interrupted: "Whoever believes the heir of Cæsar capable of shamefully deceiving a noble woman, a queen, the object of his illustrious uncle's love, insults and wounds him; but the just anger which overmastered you may serve as your apology. Ay," he added in a totally different tone, "I might even have cause to be grateful for this indignation, and

to wish for another opportunity to witness the outbreak of passion though in its unbridled fierceness —the royal lioness is scarcely aware of her own beauty when the tempest of wrath sweeps her away. What must she be when it is love that constrains the flame of her glowing soul to burst into a blaze?"

"Her glowing soul!" Cleopatra eagerly repeated, and the desire awoke to subjugate this man who had so confidently boasted of his power of resistance. Though he might be stronger than many others, he certainly was not invincible. And aware of her still unbroken sway over the hearts of men, her eyes sparkled with the alluring radiance of love, and a bewitching smile brightened her face.

The young Imperator's heart began to chafe under the curb and to beat more quickly, his cheeks flushed and paled by turns. How she gazed at him! What if she loved the nephew as she had once loved the uncle who, through her, had learned what bliss life can offer? Ay, it must be happiness to kiss those lips, to be clasped in those exquisite arms, to hear one's own name tenderly spoken by those musical tones. Even the magnificent marble statue of Ariadne, which he had seen in Athens, had not displayed to his gaze lines more beautiful than those of the woman reclining on yonder pillows. Who could venture to speak in her presence of vanished charms? Ah, no! The spell which had

conquered Julius Cæsar was as vivid, as potent as ever. He himself felt its power; he was young, and after such unremitting exertions he too yearned to quaff the nectar of the noblest joys, to steep body and soul in peerless bliss.

So, with a hasty movement, he took one step towards her couch, resolved to grasp her hands and raise them to his lips. His ardent gaze answered hers; but surprised by the power which, though so heavily burdened with physical and mental suffering, she still possessed over the strongest and coldest of men, she perceived what was passing in his soul, and a smile of triumph, blended with the most bitter contempt, hovered around her beautiful lips. Should she dupe him into granting her wishes by feigning love for the first time? Should she yield to the man who had insulted her, in order to induce him to accord the children their rights? Should she, to gratify her lover's foe, relinquish the sacred grief which was drawing her after him, give posterity and her children the right to call her, instead of the most loyal of the loyal, a dishonoured woman, who sold herself for power?

To all these questions came a prompt denial. The single stride which Octavianus had made towards her, his eyes aflame with love, gave her the right to feel that she had vanquished the victor, and the proud delight of triumph was too plainly reflected in her mobile features to escape the penetrating, distrustful gaze of the subjugated Cæsar.

But he had scarcely perceived what threatened him, and remembered her words concerning his famous uncle's surrender only to her and to death, when he succeeded in conquering his quickly kindled senses. Blushing at his own weakness, he averted his eyes from the Queen, and when he met those of Proculejus and the other witnesses of the scene, he realized the abyss on whose verge he stood. He had half succumbed to the danger of losing, by a moment's weakness, the fruit of great sacrifices and severe exertions.

His expressive eyes, which had just rested rapturously upon a beautiful woman, now scanned the spectators with the stern glance of a monarch and, apparently wishing to moderate an excess of flattering recognition which might be misinterpreted, he said in an almost pedagogical tone:

"Yet we would rather see the noble lioness in the majestic repose which best suits all sovereigns. It is difficult for a calm, deliberate nature like mine to understand an ardent, quickly kindling heart."

Cleopatra had watched this sudden transition with more surprise than disappointment. Octavianus had half surrendered to her, but recovered his self-command in time, and a man of his temperament does not readily succumb twice to a danger which he barely escaped. And this was well! He should learn that he had misunderstood the glance which fired his heart; so she answered distantly, with majestic dignity:

"Misery such as mine quenches all ardour. And love? Woman's heart is ever open to it, save where it has lost the desire for power and pleasure. You are young and happy, therefore your soul still yearns for love—I know that—though not for mine. To me, on the contrary, one suitor only is welcome, he with the lowered torch, whom you keep aloof from me. With him alone is to be found the boon for which this soul has longed from childhood—painless peace! You smile. My past gives you the right to do so. I will not lessen it. Each individual lives his or her own life. Few understand the changes of their own existence, far less those of a stranger's. The world has witnessed how Peace fled from my path, or I from hers, and yet I see the possibility of finding the way. I am safe from the only things which would debar me from those joys—humiliation and disgrace." Here she hesitated; then, as if in explanation, continued in the sweetest tones at her command: "Your generosity, I think, will guard from these two foes the woman whom just now—I did not fail to see it—you considered worthy of a more than gracious glance. I shall treasure it among memories which will never fade. But now, illustrious Imperator! tell me, what is your decision concerning me and the children? What may we hope from your favour?"

"That Octavianus will be more and more warmly animated by the desire to accord you and

yours a worthy destiny, the more firmly you expect that he will attest his generosity."

"And if I fulfil this desire and expect from you everything that is great and noble—the condition is not difficult—what proofs of your graciousness will then await us?"

"Paint them with all the fervour of that vivid power of imagination which interpreted even my glance in your favour, and devised the marvels by which you rendered the greatest and most brilliant man in Rome the happiest of mortals. But—by Zeus!—it is the fourth hour after noonday!"

A glance from the window had caused the exclamation. Then, pressing his hand upon his heart, he continued in a tone of the most sincere regret: "How gladly I would prolong this fascinating conversation, but important matters which, unfortunately, cannot be deferred, summon me——"

"And your answer?" cried Cleopatra, panting for breath and gazing at him with eyes full of expectation.

"Must I repeat it?" he asked with impatient haste. "Very well, then. In return for implicit confidence on your part, favour, forgiveness, cordiality, every consideration which you can justly desire. Your heart is so rich in warmth of feeling, grant me but a small share of it and ask tangible gifts in return. They are already bestowed." Then greeting her like a friend who is reluctant to say farewell, he hastily left the apartment.

"Gone—gone!" cried Iras as the door closed behind him. "An eel that slips from the hand which strives to hold him."

"Northern ice," added Cleopatra gloomily as Charmian aided her to find a more comfortable position. "As smooth as it is cold; there is nothing more to hope."

"Yes, my royal mistress, yes," Iras eagerly protested. "Dolabella is waiting for him in the Philadelphus court-yard. From him—you have his promise—we shall learn what Octavianus has in store for you."

In truth, the Cæsar did find the youth at the first gate of the palace, inspecting his superb Cyrenean horses.

"Magnificent animals!" cried Octavianus; "a gift from the city! Will you drive with me?—A remarkable, a very remarkable woman!"

"Isn't she?" asked Dolabella eagerly.

"Undoubtedly," replied the Cæsar. "But though she might almost be your mother, an uncommonly dangerous one for youths of your age. What a melting voice, what versatility, what fervour! And yet such regal grace in every movement! But I wish to stifle, not to fan, the spark which perhaps has already fallen into your heart. And the play, the farce which she just enacted before me in the midst of most serious matters!"

He uttered a low, short laugh; but Dolabella exclaimed expectantly: "You rarely laugh, but

this conversation—apparently—excites your mirth. So the result was satisfactory?"

"Let us hope so. I was as gracious to her as possible."

"That is delightful. May I know in what manner your kindness and wisdom have shaped her future? Or, rather, what did you promise the vanquished Queen?"

"My favour, if she will trust me."

"Proculejus and I will continue to strengthen her confidence. And if we succeed——?"

"Then, as I have said, she will have my favour —a generous abundance of favour."

"But her future destiny? What fate will you bestow on her and her children?"

"Whatever the degree of her confidence deserves."

Here he hesitated, for he met Dolabella's earnest, troubled gaze, which was blended with a shade of reproach.

Octavianus desired to retain the enthusiastic admiration of the youth, who perhaps was destined to lofty achievements, so he continued in a confidential tone: "To you, my young friend, I can venture to speak more frankly. I will gladly grant the most aspiring wishes of this fascinating and, I repeat, very remarkable woman, but first I need her for my triumph. The Romans would have cause to reproach me if I deprived them of the sight of this Queen, this peerless wom-

an, in many respects the first of her time. We shall soon set out for Syria. The Queen and her children I shall send in three days to Rome. If, in the triumphal procession there, she creates the sensation I anticipate from a spectacle so worthy of admiration, she shall learn how I reward those who oblige me."

Dolabella had listened in silence. When the Cæsar entered the carriage, he requested permission to remain behind.

Octavianus drove alone eastward to the camp where, in the vicinity of the Hippodrome, men were surveying the ground on which the suburb of Nikopolis—city of victory—was to be built to commemorate for future generations the victory of the first Emperor over Antony and Cleopatra. It grew, but never attained any great importance.

The noble Cornelius gazed indignantly after his sovereign's fiery steeds; then, drawing up his stately figure to its full height, he entered the palace with a firm step. The act might cost him his life, but he would do what he believed to be his duty to the noble woman who had honoured him with her friendship. This rare sovereign was too good to feast the eyes of the rabble.

A few minutes later Cleopatra knew her impending ignominy.

CHAPTER XXV.

The next morning the Queen had many whispered conversations with Charmian, and the latter with Anukis. The day before, Archibius's gardener had brought to his master's sister some unusually fine figs, which grew in the old garden of Epicurus. This fruit was also mentioned, and Anukis went to Kanopus, and thence, in the steward's carriage, with a basket of the very best ones to the fish-market. There she had a great deal to say to Pyrrhus, and the freedman went to his boat with the figs.

Shortly after the Nubian's return the Queen came back to the palace from the mausoleum. Her features bore an impress of resolution usually alien to them; nay, the firmly compressed lips gave them an expression of actual sternness. She knew what duty required, and regarded her approaching end as an inevitable necessity. Death seemed to her like a journey which she must take in order to escape the most terrible disgrace. Besides, life after the death of Antony was no longer the same; it had been only a tiresome delay and waiting for the children's sake.

The visit to the tomb had been intended, as it were, to announce her coming to her husband. She had remained a long time in the silent hall, where she had garlanded the coffin with flowers, kissed it, talked to the dead man as if he were still alive, and told him that the day had come when what he had mentioned in his will as the warmest desire of his heart—to rest beside her in the same tomb—would be fulfilled. Among the thousand forms of suffering which had assailed her, nothing had seemed so hard to bear as to be deprived of his society and love.

Then she had gone into the garden, embraced and kissed the children, and entreated them to remember her tenderly. Her purpose had not been concealed from Archibius, but Charmian had told him the menace of the future, and he approved her decision. By the exertion of all his innate strength of will, he succeeded in concealing the grief which rent his faithful heart. She must die. The thought of seeing her adorn the triumphal procession of Octavianus was unbearable to him also. Her thanks and entreaties to be an affectionate guardian to the children were received with an external calmness which afterwards seemed to him utterly incomprehensible.

When she spoke of her approaching meeting with her lover, he asked whether she had entirely abandoned the teachings of Epicurus, who believed that death absolutely ended existence.

Cleopatra eagerly assented, saying: "Absence of pain has ceased to appear to me the chief earthly blessing, since I have known that love does not bring pleasure only, since I have learned that pain is the inseparable companion of love. I will not give it up, nor will I part from my lover. Whoever experiences what fate has allotted to me has learned to know other gods than those whom the master described as dwelling happily in undisturbed repose. Rather eternal torture in another world, united to the man I love, than painless, joyless mere existence in a desolate, incomprehensible, unknown region! You will be the last to teach the children to yearn for freedom from pain——"

"Because, like you," cried Archibius, "I have learned how great a blessing is love, and that love is pain."

As he spoke he bent over her hand to kiss it, but she took his temples between her hands and, bending hastily, pressed her lips on his broad brow.

Then his self-control vanished, and, sobbing aloud, he hurried back to the children.

Cleopatra gazed after him with a sorrowful smile, and leaning on Charmian's arm, she entered the palace.

There she was bathed and, robed in costly mourning garments, reclined among her cushions to take breakfast, which was usually served at this hour.

Iras and Charmian shared it.

When dessert was carried in, the Nubian brought a basket filled with delicious figs. A peasant, she told Epaphroditus, who was watching the meal, had given them to her because they were so remarkably fine. Some had already been snatched by the guards.

The Queen and her companions ate a little of the fruit, and Proculejus, who had come to greet Cleopatra, was also persuaded to taste one of the finest figs.

At the end of the meal Cleopatra wished to rest.

The Roman gentlemen and the guards retired.

At last the women were alone, and gazed at each other silently.

Charmian timidly lifted the upper layer of the fruit, but the Queen said mournfully:

"The wife of Antony dragged through the streets of Rome behind the victor's chariot, a spectacle for the populace and envious matrons!" Then, starting up, she exclaimed: "What a thought! Was it too great for Octavianus, or too petty? He who so loudly boasts his knowledge of mankind expects this impossibility from the woman who revealed her inmost soul to him as fully as he concealed his from her. We will show him how small is his comprehension of human nature, and teach him modesty."

A contemptuous smile flitted over her beautiful lips as, with rapid movements, she flung handful after handful of figs on the table, till she saw some-

thing stirring under the fruit, and with a sigh of relief exclaimed under her breath:

"There it is!" as with hasty resolution she held out her arm towards the asp, which hissed at her.

While gazing intently at the movements of the viper, which seemed afraid to fulfil the dread office, she said to her attendants:

"I thank you—thank you for everything. Be calm. You know, Iras, it will cause no pain. They say it is like falling asleep." Then she shuddered slightly, adding: "Death is a solemn thing; yet it must be. Why does the serpent delay? There—there; I will keep firm. Ambition and love were the moving forces of my life. Men shall praise my memory.—I follow you, Mark Antony!"

Charmian bent over the left arm of her royal mistress, which hung loosely at her side, and, weeping aloud, covered it with kisses, while Cleopatra, watching the motions of the asp still more closely, added:

"The peace of our garden of Epicurus will begin to-day. Whether it will be painless, who can tell? Yet—there I agree with Archibius—life's greatest joy—love—is blended with pain, as yonder branch of exquisite roses from Dolabella, the last gift of friendship, has its sharp thorns. I think you have both experienced this. The twins and my little darling—— When they think of their mother and her end, will not the children——"

Here she uttered a low cry. The asp had struck its fangs into the upper part of her arm like an icy flash of lightning, and a few instants later Cleopatra sank back upon her pillows lifeless.

Iras, pale but calm, pointed to her, saying: "Like a sleeping child. Bewitching even in death. Fate itself was constrained to do her will and fulfil the last desire of the great Queen, the victorious woman, whom no heart resisted. Its decree shatters the presumptuous plan of Octavianus. The victor will show himself to the Romans without thee, thou dear one."

Sobbing violently, she bent over the inanimate form, closed the eyes, and kissed the lips and brow. The weeping Charmian did the same.

Then the footsteps of men were heard in the anteroom, and Iras, who was the first to notice them, cried eagerly:

"The moment is approaching! I am glad it is close at hand. Does it not seem to you also as if the very sun in the heavens was darkened?"

Charmian nodded assent, and whispered, "The poison?"

"Here!" replied Iras calmly, holding out a plain pin. "One little prick, and the deed will be done. Look! But no. You once inflicted the deepest suffering upon me. You know—Dion, the playmate of my childhood—— It is forgiven. But now—you will do me a kindness. You will spare my using the pin myself. Will you not? I will

repay you. If you wish, my hand shall render you the same service."

Charmian clasped her niece to her heart, kissed her, pricked her arm lightly, and gave her the other pin, saying:

"Now it is your turn. Our hearts were filled with love for one who understood how to bestow it as none other ever did, and our love was returned. What matters all else that we sacrificed? Those on whom the sun shines need no other light. Love is pain," she said in dying, "but this pain—especially that of renunciation for love's sake—bears with it a joy, an exquisite joy, which renders death easy. To me it seems as if it were merely following the Queen to—— Oh, that hurt!"

Iras's pin had pricked her.

The poison did its work quickly. Iras was seized with giddiness, and could scarcely stand. Charmian had just sunk on her knees, when some one knocked loudly at the closed door, and the voices of Epaphroditus and Proculejus imperiously demanded admittance.

When no answer followed, the lock was hastily burst open.

Charmian was found lying pale and distorted at the feet of her royal mistress; but Iras, tottering and half stupefied by the poison, was adjusting the diadem, which had slipped from its place. To keep from her beloved Queen everything that could detract from her beauty had been her last care.

Enraged, fairly frantic with wrath, the Romans rushed towards the women. Epaphroditus had seen Iras still occupied in arranging Cleopatra's ornaments. Now he endeavoured to raise her companion, saying reproachfully, "Charmian, was this well done?" Summoning her last strength, she answered in a faltering voice, "Perfectly well, and worthy a descendant of Egyptian kings." Her eyes closed, but Proculejus, the author, who had gazed long with deep emotion into the beautiful proud face of the Queen whom he had so greatly wronged, said: "No other woman on earth was ever so admired by the greatest, so loved by the loftiest. Her fame echoed from nation to nation throughout the world. It will continue to resound from generation to generation; but however loudly men may extol the bewitching charm, the fervour of the love which survived death, her intellect, her knowledge, the heroic courage with which she preferred the tomb to ignominy—the praise of these two must not be forgotten. Their fidelity deserves it. By their marvellous end they unconsciously erected the most beautiful monument to their mistress; for what genuine goodness and lovableness must have been possessed by the woman who, after the greatest reverses, made it seem more desirable to those nearest to her person to die than to live without her!"*

* The Roman's exclamation and the answer of the loyal dying Charmian are taken literally from Plutarch's narrative.

The news of the death of their beloved, admired sovereign transformed Alexandria into a house of mourning. Obsequies of unprecedented magnificence and solemnity, at which many tears of sincere grief flowed, honoured her memory. One of Octavianus's most brilliant plans was frustrated by her death, and he had raved furiously when he read the letter in which Cleopatra, with her own hand, informed him of her intention to die. But he owed it to his reputation for generosity to grant her a funeral worthy of her rank. To the dead, who had ceased to be dangerous, he was ready to show an excess of magnanimity.

The treatment which he accorded to Cleopatra's children also won the world's admiration. His sister Octavia received them into her own house and intrusted their education to Archibius.

When the order to destroy the statues of Antony and Cleopatra was issued, Octavianus gave his contemporaries another proof of his disposition to be lenient, for he ordered that the numerous statues of the Queen in Alexandria and Egypt should be preserved. True, he had been influenced by the large sum of two thousand talents paid by an Alexandrian to secure this act of generosity. Archibius was the name of the rare friend who had impoverished himself to render this service to the memory of the beloved dead.

In later times the statues of the unfortunate

Queen adorned the places where they had been erected.

The sarcophagi of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, by whose side rested Iras and Charmian, were constantly heaped with flowers and offerings to the dead. The women of Alexandria, especially, went to the tomb of their beloved Queen as if it were a pilgrimage; but in after-days faithful mourners also came from a distance to visit it, among them the children of the famous lovers whom death here united—Cleopatra Selene, now the wife of the learned Numidian Prince Juba, Helios Antony, and Alexander, who had reached manhood. Their friend and teacher, Archibius, accompanied them. He taught them to hold their mother's memory dear, and had so reared them that, in their maturity, he could lead them with head erect to the sarcophagus of the friend who had confided them to his charge.

THE END.

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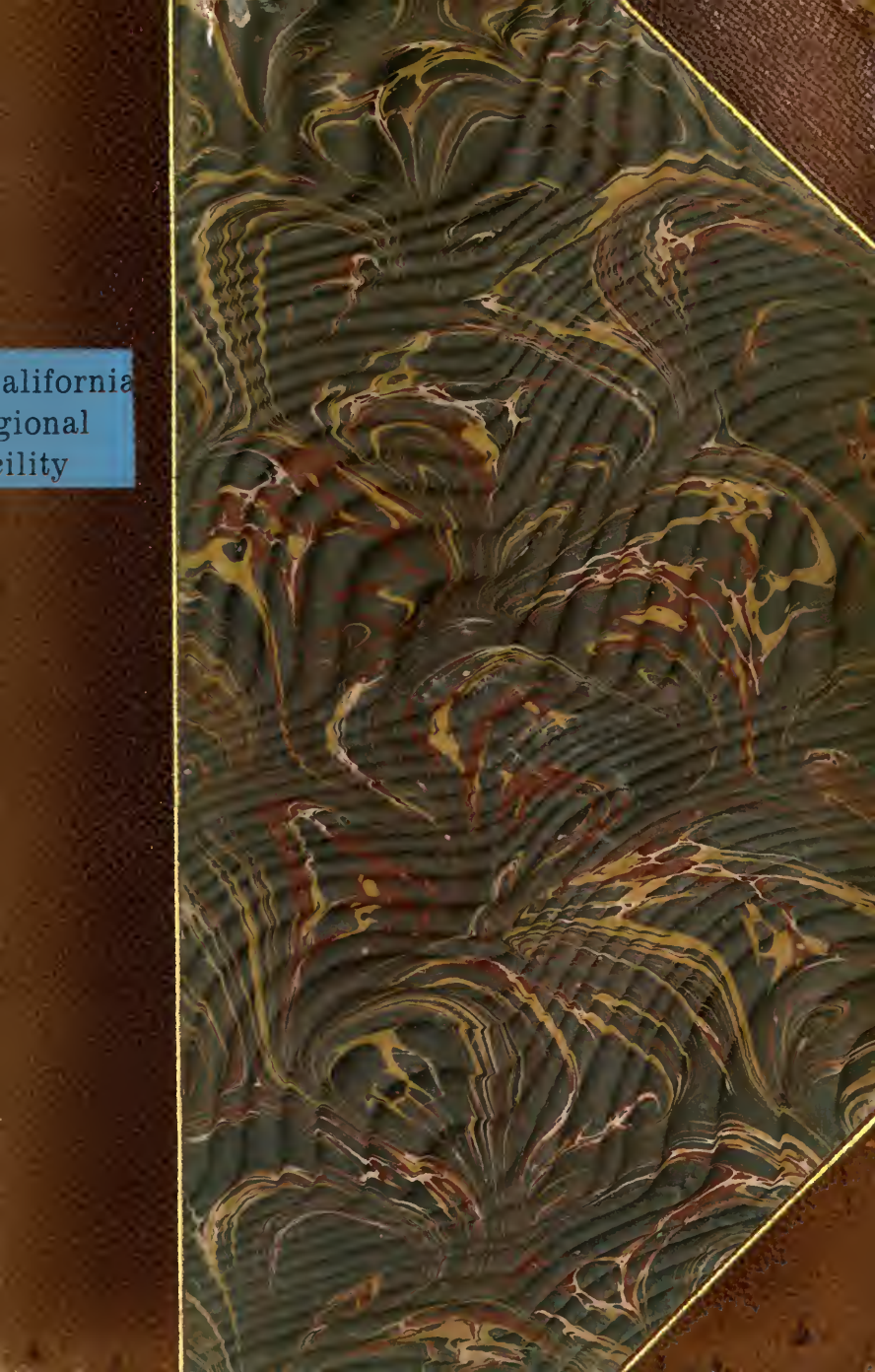
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